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UNCLE WALTER.

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VOL. I.

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W. S. Lowndes
1852

UNCLE WALTER.

A NOVEL.

BY MRS. TROLLOPE,

AUTHOR OF

"FATHER EUSTACE," "THE BARNABYS," "MRS. MATHEWS,"
&c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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UNCLE WALTER.

CHAPTER I.

'Twas a brilliant Sunday in the month of May 184—; and the world of London was doing its best to look as like the festive time as its natural smoke-grimed complexion, and its respectable Sunday duties would permit. But both these circumstances were rather against the attempt. The glad brightness of the sun, it is true, almost contrived to gild the heavy masses of smoke which eternally overhang the metropolis of the world's workshop, and a large portion of its inhabitants were, it is also true, doing their best to enjoy the day, after the various fashions of their different ranks and classes.

That is to say, a pretty considerable majority of them were substituting occupations which they professed to believe sinful, for the duties which they professed to believe obligatory, but which they indisputably found disagreeable.

Among the more dignified and select classes of society it might indeed seem that very little could be gained by this bold emancipation from ecclesiastical restraint; for a dusty drive round the park seems, at least to the profane vulgar, not many degrees more agreeable than the dreamy imprisonment for longsome hours in a hot church, as prescribed by most Anglican ministers. Nevertheless, the influence of the park, versus the pulpit, avails to ensure a sufficient number of lordly sabbath-breakers, to make it abundantly clear to the great unwashed that their rulers were only humbugging them when they enacted Sabbath Observance Bills, and harangued against the wickedness of all popular Sunday recreations.

It was probably this not very unaccountable conviction, combined with the acknowledged sinfulness of human nature, which filled the streets, suburban tea-gardens, railway excursion trains, and all other haunts of plebeian pleasure

with the teeming population; while, on the Sunday afternoon on which our narrative commences, many a metropolitan preacher was left in a degree of abandonment approaching that which reduced the Dean of St. Patrick's to the well-remembered formulary, "Dearly beloved Roger, the Scripture moveth you and me."

Indeed, on the particular Sunday in May of which we have been speaking, the streets of London presented in more than ordinary degree a variety of sights and sounds grievous to the eyes and ears of good churchmen, and legislative Sabbatarians; for it was the first Sunday of genial, bright May weather which the lagging spring of 184— had yet produced.

Thousands were thronging forth from their close, crowded homes, and dim alleys, to solace their toilsome lives with such pale pleasures as the law permits, or to indulge in those dearer stolen delights which the wisdom of our law-makers have rendered immoral, by pronouncing them illegal.

Great had been the disgust and indignation produced that day, by irreligious apple-women and rebellious news-vendors, on the well-regu-

lated mind of the Reverend Henry Harrington, Doctor of Divinity, Warden of All Saints' College in the University of Oxford, Prebendary of the Cathedral Church of Glastonbury, and Rector of a large and wealthy parish at the west end of the metropolis. Very great and very fervent had been his indignation, as he was returning home with his family in their carriage after the exemplary discharge of their morning duties.

For many weeks past had the worthy Dr. Harrington been engaged in a vigorous attempt to put down, overcome, and annihilate these particularly scandalous offences against religion and decorum, within the bounds of his own parish; but the inefficiency of the law, or the supine apathy of the secular arm which should have enforced its provisions, had ill seconded his laudable endeavours; and apples and newspapers were still sold under his very nose every Sunday, to his great and very painful irritation.

The outrage thus offered to his professional feelings had tinged the usually placid temper of this excellent divine with a slight exacerbation, which in some sort spoiled his enjoyment of

the neat little hot luncheon which awaited his return from the morning service, though it was as usual invitingly spread, and as usual in a peculiarly snug room of that peculiarly comfortable residence, which called the Rector of St. Martin's in the West its master.

This room indeed was a most enviable sanctum: but we must now take the liberty of following him to its privacy.

Enough has already been said to convince the reader that the Warden of All Saints was what the world very justly calls, and considers, a fortunate man; yet the entire catalogue of good things that had fallen to his share has not yet been rehearsed; and while he is employed in taking off his beautifully starched bands, washing his white hands, and pouring a little eau de Cologne on his delicate cambric handkerchief before addressing himself to the refreshment just placed upon his table, we will give a brief sketch of Dr. Harrington's past history, and present social position.

His father, the Rev. John Harrington, had held the family living of Stanton Parva; which was a snug piece of preferment, worth about seven hundred a-year, with a population under

two hundred, the said population being wholly composed of the household of Stanton Hall, the ancestral seat of the Harringtons, and of the tenants and labourers on their property.

Although this Rev. John Harrington who held the living, was some five years younger than his brother Walter, who held the estate, the Rector was the father of a couple of sons, some ten or twelve years old, before the squire was married, and it can hardly be supposed that the congratulations from the Rectory to the Hall, when this event at length took place, were wholly unmixed with a feeling of disappointment.

The Rector, excusably enough perhaps under the circumstances of the case, had lived up to the extent of his income, and now there were two boys to be educated who had to make their way in the world.

However the Squire was a good brother and lent a helping hand, and the two boys were sent to one of those provincial schools whose merit is more to be found in the scholarships and fellowships, which the local partialities of pious founders have indefeasibly established in our universities, than in the particularly brilliant

educational powers attributed to the management of them.

It seems strange that these worthy founders and benefactors should have been so ignorant, or careless, of the inevitable fact that by such bequests they were for the most part providing a very powerfully operative premium on idleness and dunce-hood. But thus it is. The notions which are self-evident to every school-boy in one generation, were in a previous age truths too recondite to be discovered by the wisdom of sages.

In the case before us, however, the good things provided by the founder of All Saints College for the natives of the hundred of Whippleshaw who should be educated on the foundation of Frambury school and proceed thence to All Saints in the University of Oxford, failed to produce the mischief alluded to. Of Walter Harrington indeed the Rev. Theophilus Porsonby could make nothing at all; but of Henry, his younger brother (whom we left washing his hands, while his butler was waiting for the bell that should summon his luncheon), he made, despite her assured fellowship, an excellent scholar.

And it must be admitted, moreover, that this latter result was extremely creditable to the scholarly tastes and habits of Dr. Porsonby, for nothing but a genuine love for learning could have induced him to take any trouble in the matter, the mastership of Frambury school being richly endowed by the same munificent founder who had built the venerable halls of All Saints.

The master was indeed bound by the statutes to teach Latin, Greek, and chanting, to all such poor students born in a certain district, as should present themselves; but in the course of ages it came to pass that very few of the inhabitants of the hundred of Whippleshaw cared to be taught Latin, Greek, and chanting, so that the richly paid mastership of Frambury school became by degrees very like a sinecure; and would no doubt have become so quite, had it not been or the bribe held out to students in the shape of the scholarships.

Dr. Porsonby had just sent off his own son brim full of "Adam's Antiquities," and Greek plays, to enjoy the bounties of the pious founder; and had literally no recipient for

the overflowing treasures of his erudition, when the two Harrington boys were sent to him.

It is quite clear that the most palmy state and most perfect beau-ideal of a richly endowed school must be to have no pupils at all, as evidently as it is that of an unendowed school to have the greatest number possible; so that the labour bestowed by the good Doctor on the education of Walter and Henry Harrington, can be regarded in no other light than as a true labour of love.

The first half-yearly report, sent home with the two boys from Frambury to Stanton Parva at the holidays, informed their father that Walter had been a little unruly, and not a little idle; but that his brother Henry was a model of application, and manifested dispositions of the highest promise.

The subsequent half-year brought with them further bulletins of exactly similar import, till, in the year which made Walter fourteen and Henry thirteen, Dr. Porsonby wrote to Mr. Harrington explicitly declaring that he feared it was but too clear that his eldest son was wholly averse to intellectual pursuits, his utmost efforts having proved unavailing in leading him

to perceive in "Virgil" higher beauties than were to be found in "Robinson Crusoe," which in truth was the only book that he ever seemed to open willingly. He had brought with him, from home, as it appeared, a copy of that idle work, which had unfortunately had the effect of withdrawing his mind from all useful studies to a most lamentable degree. The learned gentleman added, that he could not but take that occasion to remark how very pernicious it was to permit lads to obtain any access to modern literature during the precious years of youth, which ought to be devoted to laying on the solid rock of classical learning, the foundation of a truly liberal education.

On other points, however, the Doctor seemed quite ready to avow that Master Walter Harrington was not a bad boy; far from it indeed, for he manifested many amiable qualities, and was a particular favourite with Mrs. Porsonby. Nevertheless, he added, he could not but feel that he should fail in his duty if he omitted to inform Mr. Harrington, that he saw no probability that his eldest son would achieve any satisfactory success in the noble career that had been marked out for him.

Of the younger boy, Dr. Porsonby had the satisfaction of reporting very differently. The only book that had ever been found in the hands of Harrington junior, beside the immortal master-pieces of Greece and Rome, was a little work that contained detailed information respecting all the scholarships and fellowships in the University of Oxford, their value, and the conditions and methods of election to them.

His progress in his studies had been most satisfactory; and if it pleased God, said the Doctor in conclusion, that he should succeed during the ensuing half-year in imbuing the young gentleman's mind with the spirit of Aristophanes as thoroughly as he had grounded him in that of the great tragedian, he doubted not that he would live to be a comfort to his family, and an honour to his country.

Now it so happened, that much about the time when this discouraging report of his eldest son reached the Rev. Mr. Harrington, the Squire's lady at the Hall had presented her husband with a fine boy; thus definitively cutting off any lingering hope the younger

brother might have still suffered to lurk in his heart, that his own son might inherit the acres which had been so long attached to his race. It also happened much about the same time, that a cousin of the family was on a visit to the Hall, who had just returned from Australia, and was about to proceed thither again. He had originally gone out with about two thousand pounds, together with a fine stock of health, energy, and industry. All these talents had increased and multiplied. He was now the owner of some thirty thousand sheep, and the father of a large family. He was an intelligent, bright, laughing-eyed, broad-shouldered man of five-and-forty, and an excellent good fellow. He and the young Walter became great friends, and soon fell into the habit of taking long rambles together over the surrounding country. The intelligence which had remained so perversely closed to the beauties of Horace, and the merits of Greek metres, seemed to kindle and expand readily enough as the boy listened to cousin George's accounts of the stirring life he had been leading in the Bush, and the varied incidents of a settler's struggle with the ele-

ments of nature, on a soil not yet subjugated to the uses of civilized man.

At length, and nearly on the eve of Mr. George Harrington's departure for Sydney, he proposed to Walter's father to take the boy with him to that young world where no man endowed with health, courage, and intelligence can be a burden to his fellows, and there to put him in a fair way to find his own path in the world, in a manner that should be more congenial to his nature than the learned career in which he had so signally failed.

Walter himself was delighted with the proposal much beyond his power of expressing the strength of his approval.

To cross the ocean, to see new countries where there were primeval forests and real wild men, and never to hear mention of prosody more, appeared to him an exuberance of good-fortune almost beyond the bounds of credibility.

To the worthy Rector, who was just then very sadly at a loss as to what he should do with a stalwart boy of fourteen, over whose indocile mind all the culture of the Rev.

Theophilus Porsonby had passed bootless as water over a duck's back, the offer was far too good, and too commodious to be rejected.

And so, despite some natural reluctance on the part of poor Mrs. Harrington, whose motherly love had been in no degree diminished by her Walter's short-comings in the career of a scholar, it was speedily determined that the offer of cousin George should be accepted with all thankfulness.

Cousin George was not one of those that let the grass grow under their feet, and but little time was suffered to elapse after the offer had been made and accepted, before he started with his young friend for his home at the antipodes. And thus Walter Harrington, with many blessings from father and mother, and a present of five hundred pounds from his uncle the Squire, had a second start offered him in the race of life.

With what success he pursued it we cannot now inquire, for it could only be done at the cost of keeping his learned brother a most unconscionably long time waiting for his luncheon. We must, however, hereafter take

time to say a few words concerning that learned brother's subsequent fortunes. But this is a topic the discussion of which we would wait for patiently, especially as nothing can be stated concerning it but what must be altogether pleasant for him to hear.

CHAPTER II.

The course along the railroad in which Henry Harrington had been appointed to run, by the regulations of the sage founder of All Saints, was perfectly smooth and uninterrupted.

From being a scholar on the foundation of Frambury he became in due course a scholar at All Saints. From a scholar of that magnificent institution he became by the natural operation of time, and a regular consumption of "commons," a fellow of the same.

And here he might have stopped. Thus far the mere fact of being a native of Whippleshaw Hundred, and a pupil at Frambury Grammar School, would have advanced him; but for his farther advancement he was altogether indebted to his own abilities and qualifications.

Without the dignified propriety of demeanour, and courteous suavity of address, for which he was distinguished, he never would have attained the position in which we find him.

Nor could this have sufficed alone to make him what he was. Neither his dignity nor his courtesy would have been so rewarded, had not their effect been aided by that profound far-sighted and ever-present perception of the side on which his bread would ultimately be found to be buttered, which, in the opinion of the majority of mankind, constitutes virtue. Without all this he never would have been Warden of All Saints, Prebendary of Glastonbury, or Rector of St. Martin's in the West.

When chosen Warden of All Saints by the votes of the majority of the fellows, the Rev. Henry Harrington was in his fortieth year. But regular habits, ease both of body and mind, a daily "constitutional," and daily dinner eaten,

> "Untaxed, untroubled, under
> The portrait of the pious founder,"

joined to a naturally well-formed frame, and good constitution, made him still a young and very comely-looking man.

Regular and well-shaped, though rather heavy features, coal-black hair, eye-brows and eyes, a clear healthy-looking complexion, and a stature of six feet without his shoes, were gifts which, joined to a generally placid and easy temper, rendered the Rev. Mr. Harrington a very popular man at this period of his life in more circles than that of the common room at All Saints.

It was about the same time, and just previous to his election to the headship of his college, that he had been called to Stanton Parva by the sudden death of his father, an event which put him into possession of the family living; for the Squire of the family for the time being had no second son to present to it.

So the fortunate Henry was presented to the living, and about the same time to a lady, who within a month or two afterwards became his wife. This was no other than the Lady Augusta Withers, third daughter of the Earl of Bentley. The match was promoted and approved by all the members of both families, so the world could not but consider the union as a highly proper one. The world did so consider it, and poured in congratulations and cards

accordingly; and none but envious old maids, sulky bachelors, and others of the small fungus tribe, whose conduct must appear detestable to all well-constituted minds, were sufficiently illiberal to speculate whether the reverend gentleman would have thrown himself and his fellowship at the feet of the Lady Augusta, if it had not chanced that his Oxford letters brought him news that the Warden was given over, and that he felt himself pretty sure of succeeding him.

Neither, perhaps, might the Lady Augusta's heart, and her father's unqualified approbation of the connexion have been so readily obtained (if we may believe such envious gossipings) had not the indiscreet "Peerage" of those days made patent to all the world that her graceful Ladyship had attained her thirty-fifth year. Such suggestions are really odious! But in spite of them, the parties were joined together in very holy wedlock; and it would be well if as much could be truly said of half the *soi-disant* holy wedlocks which the world witnesses.

Their married life passed smoothly and prosperously; successive pieces of preferment had made the Warden a wealthy man, and his aris-

tocratic marriage had greatly assisted him in obtaining such a standing in the fashionable world as suited his own tastes and propensities, as well as those of his high-born partner.

Their union had been blessed with three children. Henry, the eldest, was now eight-and-twenty; James, the second son, who was in holy orders, was twenty-five; and their sister Catherine had just completed her nineteenth year. This clerical son James, was now rector of the family living of Stanton Parva, his father having resigned in his favour.

Now the reader is in possession of all the particulars of the history and present position of the Rev. Dr. Harrington, which it is needful for him to be acquainted with at this period of our story. If the uniformity of all this prosperity was, as may well be supposed, not altogether unchequered by annoyances and vexations less apparent to the world in general than his brilliant success had been, it is probable that the reader may discover them, as well as the sources from whence they sprung, in the course of that more intimate acquaintance with his family to which it is our purpose to introduce him.

And now it is high time that the exhausted dignitary should be supplied with the refreshment, which his morning's exertions have made so necessary to him.

"Send Hutchinson to me," said the Doctor to the footman, who was putting his appetizing little repast on his study-table; and as he spoke he sank into the morocco easy-chair which had been just wheeled to the said table with the air of a man extenuated with fatigue.

He had preached that morning, and was to do so again in the afternoon; and it is probable enough, as the day was warm, and he, though a fine well-preserved old man, was of rather a full habit of body, that he did feel the need of a little stimulus.

For the Doctor was now seventy. The once abundant black hair, though nearly as plentiful as ever, was perfectly white; the florid complexion, though still clear, had become of a deeper hue than the consulting physician of an insurance-office would have approved; the full rich tone of his voice, though still mellow and powerful, had been rendered somewhat thick by years and good living, and the burly proportions of his person, which were well carried off

by his six feet of stature, though they did exceed sixteen stone, rested on supporters which, to judge by his outline of them as shown by the close-fitting long black gaiters, might be warranted to carry any weight.

Add to these particulars an abundant double chin reposing on a still more abundant cushion of soft cambric, a still bright eye and a large good-humoured mouth, still very tolerably well filled with stout teeth, and you will have a very fair notion of the Warden of All Saints in his seventieth year.

Hutchinson was a contemporary of the Warden's, had risen through the various grades of College service from scout to common-room man, and now filled the easy and dignified post of butler and confidential servant, to which he had been promoted at the time of the Doctor's election to the headship.

He was a long bony dry old man, as tall as his master, but very much less stout, with a knowing shrewd expression of features, and a nose into which many successive pipes of common-room port-wine had contributed to infuse a bright shade of ruddy hue, which gradually

deepening in intensity became a glowing purple at its extremity.

Hutchinson loved his master much, and venerated him more, for in his order of ideas the most important and most venerable spot upon the earth's surface was Oxford, and the most important and greatest man in Oxford was the Warden of All Saints. Oxford was the central sun of Hutchinson's cosmogony, London England, the world were but greater or less outflying planets which revolved round it.

Such was the respectable functionary who now presented himself at the door of the Doctor's study.

"Hutchinson," said the Doctor in a languid voice, "I won't take any sherry to-day; let me have a glass of the twenty-two India Madeira. I really am worn out."

"Of course, Sir! of course! These great crowded London churches is fit for nothing but a strong young curate to preach in. I hope, Sir, you are not a-going to preach again this afternoon?"

"I must, Hutchinson! I must," returned the Doctor; "the world expects it of me."

"The world ought to be taught," returned Hutchinson doggedly, "that the properest place for the Warden of All Saints to preach in is All Saints' College chapel; and if he takes to a London parish for the good of the church, it is as much as they can expect of him to read the Commandments and the Gospel at the altar now and then. That's what I say."

"Well, Hutchinson, bring me the Madeira, and reach me that bundle of sermons from my writing-table."

The Doctor helped himself to some pulled turkey from a covered silver dish that stood before him, added a few delicate green peas to it from another silver dish, and proceeded while eating to look over the pile of sermons he had referred to, in order to select one for his afternoon's discourse.

They were the first-fruits of the Doctor's ecclesiastical labours, having been written by him during the early years of his incumbency of Stanton Parva, and preached to the two hundred rustics which formed his congregation there.

The Doctor had a great objection to clergymen preaching sermons which were not their own composition. To do so, he argued, was to

abandon all attempt at supplying the peculiar teaching which every different congregation required according to its circumstances and condition.

On the present occasion, he felt desirous of touching severely on those street desecrations of the Sabbath, which had given him such offence on his way home from the morning service. So he selected one which had been written at a time when the country around Stanton Parva had been infested by Swing riots and incendiary fires. The text had been taken from the 7th verse of the 28th chapter of the Book of Proverbs: "Whoso keepeth the law is a wise son, but he that is a companion of a riotous man shameth his father."

This text was evidently admirably adapted to the case of the apple-women. So the sermon required only a few alterations, here and there, to render it exactly what was needed for the peculiar teaching required at that especial juncture by the parish of St. Martin's in the West.

Thus, in the following passage, a few words only were required to be changed. In the Stanton Parva discourse it had stood written: "Nor in our own neighbourhood, my brethren,

have there been wanting signs and portentous warnings, which speak trumpet-tongued to every thoughtful and pious mind, of the especial dangers of these latter days! Dangerous doctrines are abroad, and we read them translated into deeds of lawless violence and terror, in things that are passing round us."

The latter phrases were, he thought, perhaps a trifle too strong for the apple-women, but a stroke of the Doctor's pen rapidly changed them into the softened epithets of "lawless indecency" and "alarming impiety." Then followed: "Hideous anarchy has invaded our peaceful *villages*" (which was altered to *streets*), "and no man can any longer feel that his *life and property* are secure" (altered to *church and religion*).

Towards the close of the discourse, an entirely new passage was inserted to complete its perfect adaptation to the occasion. It ran thus:

"But painful, my brethren, grievously painful to every thinking mind as are all these evidences of the prelude of a subversive and irreligious spirit among our people, there is no one symptom which so irresistibly proves that the insidious poison of revolutionary doctrines

have spread among the masses of the population, as the shameless, the revolting practice of openly desecrating the Sabbath and defying the police, by carrying on a traffic demoralizing alike to purchaser and vendor in the public streets. For what guilt can be worse than his who seeks to make a profit of the wickedness of that portion of the community whose tender years lay them most open to insidious temptation? And is it not an additional aggravation, which deepens indignation into horror, and nurtures disgust into loathing, when the *sex* of the tempter is that in which every pure feeling, and every holy instinct should lead to the shedding of tears over the loss of the young soul thus lured to destruction?"

The Doctor was getting rapidly into the highest regions of the pathetic, and was polishing off a peroration, in the construction of which he had got a little hampered between "sin against the Holy Ghost," and overt rebellion against the police, when he was admonished by a silvery sound from the little time-piece on the chimney, that it was already half-past two o'clock.

So he was obliged to draw his pen through

the straggling members of the unfinished sentence, and to give up a very forcible parallel which he had intended to draw between the first apple which caused the universal fall of man, and those later specimens of the same ill-starred fruit, which were every Sunday causing the still deeper fall of so many of the children of men.

He hastily poured out a second glass of Madeira, rose with a sigh from his easy chair, and ringing for the footman, sent him to ask the Lady Augusta whether she intended to go to church, or whether her Ladyship needed the carriage elsewhere.

The answer which was speedily brought back stated that her Ladyship did not feel equal to attending church a second time that day, and that she should be glad of the carriage at half-past four, which would just give time for it to bring him back from church.

The good Doctor had feared that he might very possibly have had to make that journey on foot. The distance, indeed, was not above a couple of hundred yards, so it was not on the score of bodily fatigue that he disliked the walk, but he did not think it seemly, he said, that

when lawyers, bankers, and merchants, were taken up at the church door in their own carriages, that a dignified representative of the ecclesiastical hierarchy should be seen to wend his way among them on foot. God knew that he cared as little as most men for the pomps and vanities of life, but it was impossible not to feel that the Church must lose station and influence if her aristocracy were not placed on a level with that of other professions. Different tasks were assigned by Providence to different labourers in the Lord's vineyard; it was the duty of some to carry the precepts and consolations of religion to the poor and lowly, and it was well that the Church should be provided with ministers whose social position did not place them at too great an elevation above that of their flocks. On him had been imposed the surely more onerous task of making the glad tidings of salvation acceptable to the great ones of the earth, and it behoved him to take his station on the vantage-ground of a distinguished social position accordingly.

These were the considerations which made it agreeable to him to have a handsome, well-

appointed equipage waiting at the church door to take him home after the service.

So to this message from her Ladyship he graciously answered: "Tell your mistress that I will take care to be in time," and then turning to the handsome glass over the chimney, he was in the very act of tying on his bands, when a gentle knock was heard at his study door.

"Come in, Kate, my dear!" said the Doctor, for he knew beyond the possibility of mistake that the modest little tap came from no other fingers than those of his young daughter. "But say what you have to say in half a minute," he added as she opened the door, "for that is all the time I have to spare before starting for church."

"My errand may be easily packed into that short space, papa," returned the young lady, "for I only came to bring you this letter, which was given to mamma by mistake when we returned from church this morning; and to say that if Mr. White and Mr. Caldwell are to dine here to-day, she thinks it would be less insufferably dull if you were to ask the Miss Wigginsvilles to come in the evening. You will be sure, you know, to see some of them at church."

"Oh!—a letter from my brother Walter, I see," said the Doctor taking it from his daughter's hand. "That will keep very well till to-morrow morning. Yes, my dear, if I should see either of the spinsters, tell your mother, that I will ask them," and so saying the old gentleman bustled off to church, and Kate returned up stairs to report the result of her embassy, and then to retire to her room to make her carriage toilet in preparation for her drive to the park with her mother.

CHAPTER III.

The reader has had a peep at the Doctor in his *sanctum sanctorum*, in the snug little study which was situated behind the dining-room in his house, No. 5, in one of those quiet aristocratic streets immediately to the east of Park Lane. We will call it Vale Street for the purposes of our tale.

It will probably be now expected that we should present the Lady Augusta Harrington to him; and this I believe would be doing things in the proper order, and it cannot be denied that etiquette ought to have great weight in all things appertaining to No. 5, Vale Street; but nevertheless I cannot resist the temptation which the course of the narrative seems to offer of introducing my favourite Kate, while the Warden is

in church putting down apple-vending Sabbath-breakers, and Lady Augusta is in the drawing-room, with her friend Lady de Paddington, who had dropped in after morning church for the advantage of enjoying a little quiet chat with her.

Having described her reverend papa's *sanctum sanctorum*, we will now describe hers. It was two stories nearer the sky than that of the Doctor, and was situated over the back drawing-room—nay her special premises extended also over the boudoir which stretched beyond the said back drawing-room—and an excellent bed-room and dressing-room might have been made out of the apartment thus situated; but Kate had arranged her little territory otherwise. The small room over the boudoir contented her both for bed-room and dressing-room, and thus the really handsome-sized room over the second drawing-room, was available for securing the dear delight of an independent sitting-room, *all her own.*

This much-prized retreat, furnished according to her own fancy, stored with her own properties, and sacred to her own employments and pursuits, Kate styled her "cell," in contradistinc-

tion to her reverend father's "study," and her lady mother's "boudoir." Shall we indulge ourselves with a glance at the plenishing of Kate's "cell," while she has gone to put on her bonnet? Much may be divined, as any naturalist can tell us, respecting any creature from a minute and intelligent examination of its *habitat*.

Kate's domain was most fortunately situated, for an opposite break in the buildings of Park Lane opened to her high windows a full view of the park, and of the noble woods of Kensington beyond it. This view was Kate's great joy and pride, and she was at this time intent upon a grand scheme of getting her windows cut down to the floor, and having a little conservatory constructed, balcony-wise, outside them.

There were difficulties in the way of this project: not arising from the expense, for Kate was in the happy position of having wherewithal to gratify her tastes, without making any inroads on the large, but quite sufficiently bespoken income of her father; for a maiden aunt of his, who had died at an advanced age some six years before, had left her the whole of her snug little fortune of seven hundred a-year, the trustees of which paid fifty pounds on each

quarter day into her own fair hands, and an equal sum into those of the Doctor, for her maintenance. So the cost of the much longed-for conservatory did not present much difficulty, for the reasonable Mr. Banbury of Lincoln's Inn, Kate's acting trustee, made no objection to supplying, from Kate's accumulated savings, the needful funds.

But the Doctor had fears for the solidity of his excellent house, and doubts how far its walls might be safely trusted to bear such an additional burthen, as must be occasioned by the picturesque excrescence projected by his daughter. The Doctor was very subject to fears for the stability of constituted things, and being with good reason exceedingly well contented with the world as it is, he was strongly attached to the wisdom which counsels to "let well alone."

In this difficulty, Kate built considerable hope on the assistance of the Mr. Caldwell who has been mentioned as having been invited to dinner on that day; for the said Mr. Caldwell, though not an architect, but an officer in the Engineers, was a man of science, and though a young man, was one whose opinions on such a question, as

well as on most others, was certain of being listened to with attention.

Katherine had already contrived that he should be consulted on the subject, and his visit on the present occasion was for the especial purpose of talking over some of the plans that had been already suggested for indulging her fancy, without endangering her cautious father's property; could she obtain an opinion favourable to her scheme from so high an authority, she felt tolerably certain that she should be able to overcome all parental objections to it.

Between the windows and the fire-place of this dearly beloved apartment stood a grand pianoforte, which had been Kate's first important purchase, and had absorbed the greater portion of her first year's allowance; but it was her favourite boast that it was a finer instrument than the one in the drawing-room.

The opposite side of the room, which was unbroken by either door or window, was occupied in its whole extent by a range of shelves, whose contents, as the most cursory glance at them would show, were culled from most of the modern languages of Europe. There were the poets of almost all nations, the leading histories

of many, and of their novels and romances not a few; and moreover there might been found, if we had time to examine the shelves closely, more decided evidences as to the owner's growing tastes and opinions, in the miscellaneous mass of occasional literature—books evidently not bought to form a library, but to read at once, on the spur of the occasion.

Among these, there were, it may be feared, some few which the Doctor would have been more surprised than pleased to find there, had it ever entered his head to visit his daughter's book-shelves, and examine their contents.

As for the Lady Augusta, she exercised a most conscientious, scrupulous and vigilant control over her daughter's wardrobe and toilette, but it never occurred to her to open a volume in Kate's room, any more than in her own. Once, indeed, she remarked upon the rapidly increasing accumulation of volumes.

"Really, my dear Kate," she said, "if you add many more books to your collection, you will make your library out of proportion to the rest of the furniture in your pretty room. But you are right, I believe, in thinking it very much the fashion at present to have quantities

of books about one; one really sees them lying about now almost everywhere; and I greatly approve your taste, my dear, in your selection. For the most part they harmonize admirably together. Those white and gold, in particular, are exceedingly elegant," which latter phrase very satisfactorily developed her Ladyship's meaning when she talked of an harmonious selection in a library, which, without this explanation, might have had something obscure in it.

On the side of the room opposite the windows was a little easel, commodiously placed to receive the light duly from the left, and on it an unfinished drawing in water-colours of a part of the interior of St. Peter's, while the original from which it was in process of being copied was supported on a little desk, which stood on a table crowded with all the most improved appliances for the art.

Beside the door of entrance was a second book-case small, but deep-shelved, containing a variety of works on the fine arts, with a small collection of fine engravings on the lower shelves, while the upper ones were occupied by a goodly range of music, both vocal and instrumental.

On the table which stood before her sofa was lying a copy of Mr. Ruskin's "Seven Lamps," and Froud's "Nemesis of Faith," the latter open, and with its leaves turned downwards on the table, as having recently left the reader's hand.

And now what shall we say of the mistress of the room thus imperfectly described?

We must, I suppose, endeavour to give our readers some notion of her "bodily presentment." As to her inward self, our history will be little worth if, in the course of it, we fail in making it manifest.

Let the reader then imagine a light slenderly-formed figure, somewhat falling short of what is authoritatively pronounced to be the model height of woman; but her beautiful proportions gave a grace and charm to her carriage and movements, which more than atoned for the want of commanding stature. Her fair broad forehead was well set off by wavy braids of rich brown hair. Her eyes were brown too—dark brown—and were beautifully softened in their surpassing brightness by a deep fringe of dark silken lashes.

The well-defined eyebrows were almost

straight; but there was a mobility in them which sometimes gave a look of decision, and sometimes of *mutinerie*. It was not a regularly beautiful face. Perhaps no features so rich in expression, so stamped with intelligence, and with ready capacities for expressing sympathy with every genial mood of mind ever were regularly and perfectly beautiful. Witness the incontestable insipidity of Raphael's Madonnas. But to those whose hearts are to be fascinated only by something more rare and more ethereal than mere beauty of feature, Kate Harrington was infinitely more attractive than any mere faultless animal organization could have made her.

The chiselling of her features was delicate, and of that sharpness which so much heightens in a youthful face that *espièglerie* which our language has no adequate term to express. But if a certain amount of what perhaps comes nearest in homely Saxon phrase—if a little *devilry* might be read in the eyes, all sweet affections and soft sympathies dimpled round the mouth; and the influence of her frank, clear, silvery voice and bright child-like smile, won kind thoughts and admiring words, even from the

least genially-minded of those who knew her.

Nothing could be more becoming to a face and figure like hers than the admirably fitting dress and mantle of pale lilac silk in which we now present her to our readers; and the almost Quakerish simplicity of her snow-white chip-bonnet was prettily relieved by the sprays of hedge-roses which clustered under it round her sweet face.

Thus equipped, and perfectly ready to step into the carriage at a moment's notice, Kate came forth from her little bed-room, and resumed the volume she had been reading.

CHAPTER IV.

The Doctor having performed his afternoon duty, and returned punctually at the time stipulated, the Lady Augusta proceeded to perform hers.

Kate was summoned from her retreat to join her mother in the drawing-room, when one rapid glance from that excellent mother's practised eye sufficed to assure her that her fair daughter's toilet was irreproachable, and then they rolled away together to perform their joint duty in the park.

Duty? Yes, duty is the word, for in her inmost heart Lady Augusta considered it to be so, and she would have scouted the notion that she went there every Sunday for her pleasure. Could it, in truth, be a pleasure, even to her?

It could scarcely be so described, although the want of it would have been an annoyance and a misfortune, and the hours so occupied would have been felt to be painfully long and listless without it.

But its greatest zest most certainly arose from considering it as an important duty duly performed. For so necessary to happiness is the feeling of having something to do, and the consciousness of doing it, that the very idlest people fancy they have an immensity of necessary business to get through, and never awaken to the knowledge of the dismal fact that their whole lives are spent in doing nothing. This admirable propensity to useful activity is the gift of nature; the counteracting habit is the fruit of education. Query: What is the degree of moral responsibility attached to this species of training?

But in Lady Augusta Harrington's case, this drive in the park was very easily brought under the general head of "duty to her daughter." It was part of the great and important duty of presenting Miss Harrington to the world, in a manner and style befitting the grand-daughter of the Earl of Bentley, a phrase which that

nobleman's daughter was very filially prone to use.

But though Lady Augusta was thus absolutely bound to undergo the labour of park-duty, it does not follow that we are bound to share it with her. Of course the drive afforded the usual amount of such occupation as is found in exclaiming: "Ah! there is so and so." "Did you see Lady This?" "Was that my Lord T'other?" And sometimes there was a lively variety of remarks such as: "Look at that horrid Miss Puddingthwaite and her odious britska! She has got another new lining, Kate! she has upon my honour! Rose colour this time!"

"Well, mamma," was Kate's answer, "I am sure I shall be very glad to see Miss Puddingthwaite *couleur de rose.*"

"Ah! my love," rejoined her mother, who occasionally thought it was right to be a little sentimental and pathetic, "ah! my love, to you everything appears *couleur de rose!* But to me—"

And she would on this occasion have probably gone on for her daughter's moral instruction to quote "the rose that hides the thorn"

from Solomon, and might have bid her remember how beautifully Haynes Bailey observes that "all flesh was grass," had not Kate suddenly interrupted her by exclaiming:

"Why, mamma, there is Lord Brandling walking arm-in-arm with Mr. Caldwell! I thought Lord Brandling was at Rome. He must have just returned again. I shall be so glad to see him!"

"Yes; he is just come back. Lady de Paddington told me so this morning," returned her mother. "But just look, Kate, what a lovely horse young Filchinghan is riding! I never saw him look so well!"

And so the dull drive went on; but happily came at last to a conclusion, as even drives in Hyde Park must do, be they never so tedious. And then the ladies returned to dress for dinner.

The party at the table was increased to six, by the presence of Mr. Harrington, the Doctor's eldest son, who, though residing in London, did not avail himself of the paternal roof as his domicile; nor indeed did the family in Vale Street see as much of him as the good Doctor would have wished; for though very far from

being a severe father, either in theory or practice, and by no means wishing to have the decorous routine and tranquil comfort of his home disturbed by the somewhat incompatible habits and associations of his son, the Doctor felt sometimes a little uneasy respecting the sort of life this son was leading; and though his own path lay in so wholly contrary a direction, that he in truth knew exceedingly little respecting the young man's whereabouts and occupations, certain reports had occasionally reached him, which led him to fear that more particular inquiries were not likely to lead to any satisfactory result.

The other guests, in addition to the usual family party of the Doctor, his wife and daughter, were, as we have mentioned, Mr. Caldwell, and Mr. White, the Doctor's curate.

It was past seven, and for some minutes the Doctor had been sitting with his hands folded before him, and his eyes turned upwards to the ceiling, the very picture of martyred resignation. Mr. Caldwell was showing Miss Harrington some drawings which he had brought with him, and Mr. White was cudgelling his unhappy brains in the hope of finding some-

thing proper and appropriate to say to her Ladyship.

How far Mr. Caldwell might have shared in the general gladness when his artistic *tête-à-tête* with Miss Harrington was brought to a sudden stop, we will not pretend to say; neither is it necessary to describe Kate's degree of sympathy in the general feeling, but certain it is, that the rest of the party were infinitely relieved by the entrance of Henry Harrington at twenty minutes past seven.

The Doctor, who was nearly as angry as it was possible for him to be with any being above the rank and station of an undergraduate, could not help saying rather stiffly:

"When you do condescend to dine with us, Henry, I wish that you would also condescend to dine at our hour. You have kept us waiting nearly half an hour."

And then Mr. White gave his arm to her Ladyship, Mr. Caldwell to Kate, and the Doctor and his son followed them down to the dining-room.

"I did not see you at church this morning, Henry," said the Doctor, after he had swallowed a plateful of very restorative soup; adding, as

he pushed the sherry towards his son, "some little indisposition, I suppose?"

For the worthy Doctor asked nothing but a decent excuse on such occasions, and like all worshippers of decorum, deemed a decent lie far preferable upon such a point to a less decorous truth.

"Never was better, my dear Sir," returned the young man, filling himself a bumper, and nodding to his father as he tossed it off. "But I must say I am rather astonished you should wish to peril my religion by attending service at St. Martin's."

"Hallo! Mr. White," cried the Rector to the curate, with the same sort of good-humour Lord Eldon might have done, had some pet of a grandchild set about to impugn his law, "here's Henry going to bring a charge of heretical teaching against us."

"Indeed, Sir," pursued Henry gravely, "I fear it amounts to no less. For I am assured by James, St. James of Stanton, as I call him, that nothing is so bad for the salvation as living in one parish, and going to church in another. He says that the thing is thoroughly recognised as a fact now."

"Pooh, pooh, Sir!" quoth the Doctor, on whose heavy brow a cloud now really lowered; for the *high* tendencies of his son James were a source of great annoyance to him, and very highly offensive to his feelings and prejudices, in many ways and for many reasons. "James might occupy himself far better than in spreading such dangerous doctrines, which he has picked up from innovators who will do the Church more harm than their boasted learning will do it good; and you might do better than make such a graceless use of them."

"Nay, Sir," persisted the scape-grace, with a wicked glance at his sister, who was sitting on the other side of the table; to which glance Kate only replied by a demure compression of her lips, and an almost imperceptible shake of the head, "nay, Sir, I protest I was about to ask your advice on a point which James's teaching has rendered very embarrassing to me. You see, I spend most of the day at my club, and have all letters and cards addressed to me there. But unfortunately the lodging at which I sleep is in the next parish. Now which is my parish church?"

"Pooh, pooh, Sir!" again ejaculated the

Doctor with something very like a growl, "I request that I may hear no more of this stuff."

"But I assure you, Sir," persisted his incorrigible son, who seemed determined to spoil his father's dinner and torment him with an indigestion, "I do really assure you that the question is one which deserves examination. For just observe, Sir. James tells me that the priest of my parish is the pastor and master specially appointed by providence to teach me; that I must hear the Church and listen to the Church, and that no other does or can represent the Church to me. But the most curiously unfortunate fact of the matter is, that Providence has provided that 'the truth' taught to parishioners of the parish in which my club is situated differs very much, and is, indeed, in many respects quite contradictory to 'the truth' taught to the inhabitants of that in which my lodging happens to be. And I thought, Sir, that perhaps you might be able to explain to me how it is, that the obedience which I am so anxious to render to the Church, may oblige me to change the whole fabric of my religious convictions in consequence of my changing my lodging. Certainly," he added, with an air of profound

meditation, "nothing can appear more puzzling in all the inscrutable ways of Providence than that the divinely appointed teaching of the Church shall prescribe to the faithful the doctrine of prevenient grace, perhaps, in Mary'bone, baptismal regeneration in Bloomsbury, election and reprobation in Pall Mall, and the operative efficacy of absolution in Piccadilly."

"Said I not well, Sir," broke forth the Doctor, addressing Mr. White with an explosion of voice, deep-toned and sonorous, "said I not well, when I told you the other day that our lot had been cast on evil times? What mischief may we not expect when laymen, whose presumption is equalled only by their ignorance, meddle with questions which even the Fathers of the Church ought only to approach, and that with deep awe and cautious forbearance. Of a truth may we say that, 'Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.' But this, Sir, comes of the presumptuous folly of self-sufficient young men, who must needs proclaim themselves to be better and wiser than their fathers, and who, by seeking to introduce changes in a fabric which has been hallowed by the veneration of ages, have caused schism and perilous questionings

to creep in, where before were unity and peace. Eh, Mr. White?"

"Dangerous indeed, Sir," replied Mr. White in a doleful tone; which probably appeared to him as safe a reply as he could make under the circumstances.

"So then, if I understand you rightly, Sir," pursued Henry Harrington, still addressing his father without taking any heed of gentle Mr. White's contribution to the conversation, "what you would recommend to us of the laity, is to eat, drink and pay our tithes, and trouble our heads no farther in the matter."

"The tone you take, Sir, precludes the possibility of my conversing with you on the subject," retorted the Doctor, in his most magnificent and Johnsonian manner.

"Have you any news from Glastonbury, Mr. White?"

Mr. White hailed this diversion with infinite alacrity. He had no taste for theological disputes, especially when his venerated superiors in the Church were so apt to take different sides, as seemed to be the case at that unfortunate moment; whereas on the subject of news from Glastonbury, he felt very considerable interest;

for Mr. White, who had been educated as a Bible-clerk on the foundation of All Saints, and had from the connexion so formed become the Warden's Curate on his London preferment, was exceedingly anxious to obtain by the same interest a minor canonry in the Cathedral of Glastonbury. It was a position which would suit him much better than the curacy of St. Martin's in all respects.

He hated London, and its inhabitants and its clerical duties. With the rich and noble of his parishioners he felt himself *gênée*, ill at ease, and never for a moment free from an awkward feeling of restraint; while the ways, and habits, and troubles of the London poor were of a class for which he had neither comprehension nor sympathy; and to deal with them judicially required an amount of experience and worldly wisdom which he did not possess.

He might have acquitted himself very respectably of such duties as visiting a rheumatic old dame in a country cottage, or investigating the claims of a distressed labourer to out-door relief; but he was altogether at sea among the more complicated requirements of the London poor.

Moreover he was musical, and had a fine voice; an advantage displayed to great advantage in the situation of minor canon. In short, the duties which would be required of him in the chair of Glastonbury, were precisely such as he was conscious he could perform with pleasure and credit both to himself and the Cathedral.

His tastes and habits, good man, were altogether countrified and rural; many excellent qualities of heart, and some of head into the bargain perhaps, had the Rev. Jonas White; and the worst thing, I believe, that his worst enemy could say of him was, that perhaps he was a little addicted to poaching, and a trifle fonder of taking a part in a glee, or a bowl, after he had heard the chimes at midnight, than quite became his cloth.

But then, as to the fact of his wearing that cloth, was it the fault of poor Jonas White that his father, being a chaplain in the University, had destined him for the clerical profession from the cradle upwards? that he had obtained the promise of a Bible-clerkship for him before he could go alone? or that the only educational preparation for the sacred

calling had been, the giving him clearly to understand that he was to get his bread in the Church?

Yet had Jonas White been intended for a bricklayer, his spiritual breeding might have been much the same. The result of this was, that Jonas entertained a very truly conscientious conviction that he was admirably performing his duty in that state of life to which it had pleased God to call him by not getting rusticated as a Bible-clerk, by not getting plucked as a candidate for a degree, by duly passing his examination for Holy Orders, and by labouring away diligently at marrying, baptising, and burying the parishioners of St. Martin's in the West, as Curate.

The Doctor, therefore, touched on a very interesting topic to Mr. White when he asked about the latest news from Glastonbury. Old Mr. Jackson the Precentor was supposed to have at length sung his last anthem, and Mr. Jackson was by far the oldest of the cathedral clergy at Glastonbury, where he had been Precentor for nearly half a century, and was now dying at eighty-seven, after having been the glory of the choir for the first twenty years

of his incumbency, and its destruction for the last seventeen.

"I got a letter this morning, Sir," said the well-pleased Mr. White in reply to his Rector's question respecting news from Glastonbury. "I believe poor old Jackson is going, Sir. I am told that he cannot last many days longer."

"Well, White, I'll be as good as my promise, and do all I can for you. But you must not be too sanguine. There's the Dean, you know, and he perhaps—"

"I happen to know, Sir," returned the Curate rather eagerly, "that I am so fortunate as to have had my musical abilities, such as they are, favourably mentioned to the Dean, and that he has written to a friend at Oxford to inquire respecting my voice. Dr. Barrington, I am told, takes great interest in the choir, and is very anxious to make it once again all it is said to have been in poor Jackson's younger days."

"Well, in that case," replied the Doctor, "I think we shall have a very good chance; for Dr. Blanchard will go with the Dean of course, and I think I can count on the support

of my old friend Tarleford. Well, White! I am sure I wish you all success, though it will involve the necessity of my looking out for a new curate."

While this conversation had been passing between the Doctor and the gentlemen near him, Lady Augusta, Kate, and Mr. Caldwell, had been engaged in a discussion on the causes of the lamentably low state of architectural art at the present day in England. The conversation had commenced by Kate making a vehement attack on the unfortunate National Gallery, which, truth to say, was rather like "kicking one who had no friends," but Kate had a theory of her own on the subject of a building for the exhibition of pictures, and the subject was a favourite one with her.

This had led to a general view of the deplorable number of fine opportunities, which had recently in London only served to produce disgraceful failures in our architectural attempts.

The splendid exception of the "Palace of Westminster," as our parliamentary chambers are rather affectedly called, was however not forgotten, and had all justice done it; but for

the rest but little mercy was shown. Mr. Caldwell had ventured to throw out a suggestion that the real root of the evil must be looked for in the defective education, and consequent unenlightened judgment and bad taste of our upper and middle classes generally, rather than in any epidemic of incapacity on the part of our architects.

This audacious heresy had "called up" Lady Augusta, who, in the first place, really could not see what the education of the upper classes could have to do with the matter at all; and in the next place had "always understood that no more liberal and perfect education *could* be given than that afforded by our public schools and universities."

This latter subject was an ocean too vast and too deep to be plunged into with such a fellow-swimmer as the Lady Augusta, with the slightest hope of reaching a sure footing on any shore; so Mr. Caldwell contented himself with observing generally to her Ladyship that he thought the practical architects of the present day had many difficulties to contend against.

"They are," said he, "more apt than they should be to make the rules of Art, which ought

to be as eternal as the laws of Nature, bend and yield before the caprices of a patron's taste; and if they cannot please the said patrons with what is good, they condescend to content him with what they know to be bad."

"But we have been talking chiefly of public buildings, Mr. Caldwell," observed Kate.

"And it is especially with regard to public buildings that the deficient education I have mentioned operates most fatally," said Mr. Caldwell. "What we want is not so much a general diffusion of taste, or even a knowledge of artistic principles, as of serious appreciation of the moral and political influence of art, especially of architectural art on the fortunes and civilization of a nation. Members of executive committees, and gentlemen of the House of Commons cannot be got to understand what wide-spread and self-propagating mischief they are doing by extinguishing the sense of beauty in the minds of the people, and making those 'sermons in stones' which the great edifices of a nation are eternally preaching, lessons of ugliness, vulgarity and meanness."

"Well, I protest," exclaimed Lady Augusta, shrugging her shoulders, and elevating her eye-

brows, "I do not see what architecture can have to do with politics."

"A vast majority of the collective wisdom of the nation agrees with your Ladyship," replied Mr. Caldwell, smiling. "It would be unfair not to confess it."

The ladies now rose to leave the room; the Doctor filled and drank a second bumper of port, and then, pushing the bottle towards Mr. Caldwell, threw himself back in his arm-chair for the enjoyment of a short nap, and soon gave very convincing evidence of having found the blessing he sought by a regular series of deep-toned snores.

CHAPTER V.

"I SAY, old fellow," said Henry Harrington to Mr. White, "shan't you find it rather difficult to make it all right down at Glastonbury? What with the governor here, and old Barrington, I think you'll be puzzled. The governor is quite one of the old sort as St. James of Stanton calls them, but the Dean, I am told, is pretty considerable 'high.' Perhaps it comes from keeping him too long without a bishopric. What d'ye think about it? How shall you manage to be all things to all men? to all prebendal men, I mean, down at Glastonbury? Eh!"

"By minding my own business, which I take to be singing," returned White. "If I sing in tune, my doctrine will neither be found

too high nor too low, I believe; and as long as I have got a good tenor, I shall have no fault found with my way."

"Well, I hope it may answer," returned Henry, "and that I may live to hear you give them 'Glorious Apollo' as well at Glastonbury, when sober, as I have heard you give it to us in the common-room at All Saints when a small matter the reverse."

"For shame, Harrington. Hush! There's your father waking," said the Curate, looking frightened.

"Not he, friend Jonas. I say, Caldwell, are you and the governor going to talk architecture and politics all the evening? For if so, I think I shall take myself off. That is if I knew what on earth to do with myself. Surely there never was any incentive to suicide like a Sunday evening in London!"

"Come, gentlemen," said the Doctor, aroused by the vehemence of his son's accents, "come, let us go and get a cup of coffee in the drawing-room. I dare say our three Graces, or Muses, if that title may be thought to suit them better, have arrived by this time."

"What, Sir? you do not mean that you

receive the noble race of Wigginsville in your humble halls to-night?" cried Henry, in an accent of affected delight. "Come, come, things are looking brighter—there will be better fun than I bargained for. But perhaps by this time I ought to say De-Von-Fitz-Mac-ap-Wiggonsville in speaking of these noble products of heraldic art? But I can't help thinking that if I had been called in as Garter King of Arms, to operate on the plebeian patronymic of Wiggins, I should have refined it into Wyggynnes. There is very great aristocratic virtue in a *y*, especially if pronounced long, and a veritable Norman savour about a double *n*, finished off with an *e*. Methinks Fitzwyggynnesville would have been highly effective, imposing alike to ear and eye, and must have consigned the worthy distiller deceased, and his objectional appellation, to merited oblivion for evermore."

The Doctor half smiled, but shook his head, and held up his fore-finger very reprovingly.

"But, Sir," persisted his graceless son, "if you must make a mythological triad of these high-born spinsters, allow me to suggest the Fates as more calculated to convey a just idea of Miss Hannah, Miss Mary Jane, and Miss

Jemima Wigginsville, than either Graces or Muses."

"Be quiet, Harry, I won't have the good souls laughed at," said the Doctor, leading the way up the stairs. "There are worse people, I assure you, than the Miss Wigginsvilles, in many ways."

"Quite true, Sir," rejoined his son, with a profound sigh; "but scarcely any more variously ridiculous, I should think."

"Well, well, you are incorrigible! But at any rate I must beg and entreat that if quiz them you must, you will not do it so as to run any risk of giving them pain."

"Would not hurt a hair of their heads for the world, Sir! I doubt though, if dear Miss Hannah has any to hurt," replied his son. "But I will tell you," he added, "what I will do to please them, if you will allow me. I'll send Robert with a note to my old acquaintance, Mr. Garble, and ask him to come here to tea. If that is not self-sacrifice and devotion in the service of your *protégées*, I don't know what you would call so."

"I am not particularly fond of Mr. Garble myself, Henry," returned his father. "But,

however, as the three spinsters certainly are, you have my full permission to get him if you can."

Despite his friendship for the Misses Wigginsville, the good Doctor was not sorry to hear any aid suggested which might remove from himself the fatigue of entertaining them.

So the note to Mr. Garble was really written and dispatched; and this being done, the well-satisfied gentlemen entered the drawing-room, which they found occupied by half a dozen ladies, for besides Lady Augusta and Miss Harrington, there were the three Miss Wigginsvilles and another lady whom it is now necessary to present to the reader.

Indeed, as she is a member of the Doctor's family, she ought to have been mentioned before. But having been absent all day at a short distance from London, with friends with whom she had been passing the Sunday for the purpose of attending a favourite preacher, she has not been exactly within our reach.

It is the Lady Juliana Witherby of whom we are speaking, the younger and unmarried sister of Lady Augusta Harrington.

For many years past she had been an inmate of the Doctor's family and now, having dined with

her suburban friend Mrs. Larraby, "between the services," she had returned home in time to take her evening coffee in her sister's drawing-room.

This home in Dr. Harrington's family was not altogether a happy one; yet perhaps, under the circumstances, it was less the contrary than might have been expected; for in the first place it was a home accorded by charity, as Lady Juliana's pitiful little fortune would scarcely have sufficed to procure her decent food and lodging; and somehow or other this charity did not seem to be of the species which blesses both the giver and receiver. In fact, poor Lady Juliana was, in different ways, disagreeable to every member of the Doctor's household.

To that dignified and orthodox divine himself, her propensity to run about after popular preachers, and all the other amusements of *dilettante* religion, was particularly distasteful.

Yet, to do the Warden justice, he was far from being unkind to his sister-in-law, and he was much too gentlemanlike and generous ever to have felt the maintenance of the poor soul as any burthen in a pecuniary point of view, and if his tolerance of her offending religious

crotchets was somewhat too evidently tinged with contemptuous superiority, it must be remembered that they assailed all his prejudices in their tenderest point.

To poor Kate she was certainly an unmitigated bore, and perennial source of annoyance; for it unfortunately happened that all Kate did, said, thought, read, painted, or sung was, in the opinion of her aunt, so thoroughly saturated with the abounding original sin of her nature, as to make it her spinster Ladyship's imperative duty to be continually entering one never-ending still-beginning protest against the whole tenor of her niece's life.

Kate returned this very unpleasant solicitude for her spiritual welfare by an equally incessant, and much more effectual care, for her aunt's temporal comforts; and really never attempted any resistance, except on one cardinal point, namely, the sacred preservation of her cell from all intrusion. And truly, without this magna charta of her rights and privileges, Kate's life would hardly have been worth having under the same roof with the Lady Juliana.

It was, however, to Lady Augusta that her sister's residence under the Doctor's roof gave,

perhaps, the most pungent annoyance. At all events, it was Lady Augusta's temper that suffered most from the petty troubles produced by Lady Juliana's whims and ways, and it was assuredly she who most punctually repaid them by making the offender suffer in her turn.

There were, in truth, many causes why the two sisters were not well calculated to live amicably together.

Lady Juliana had in her day been a beauty. Lady Augusta never had. Hence, in two narrow, ill-regulated minds, innumerable jealousies, heart-burnings, and mutual dislikes had sprung up from their earliest years.

A marriage, which it had once appeared probable that Lady Juliana would have contracted, had been broken off under circumstances calculated to throw a certain degree of shade over the noble family of Witherby, and this was an offence which it was not in Lady Augusta's nature to forgive.

And then in matters of daily life, wherein Lady Augusta found that her position in society, and her duty as a mother, required her occasionally to act in a manner not altogether accordant with the strict rules of religion,

Lady Juliana was for ever near her, protesting by conduct, by look, and by insinuation most provokingly against all such offences.

So that, from one cause or another, there was always a sort of semi-subdued acrimony and mutual irritation between the two sisters. They were, moreover, very essentially unlike in mind as well as in person.

Lady Augusta was rather short, and though not fat, was decidedly *embonpoint*. The most remarkable feature in her face was an immense Roman nose, which imparted a sort of hawk-like expression to her face. A sharp, bright eye, high cheek-bones, a somewhat large, but very well-formed mouth, and a broad square chin, gave indications of energy, firmness, and strength of will, at the expense of everything like softness or gentleness of character.

Her sole pretension to beauty of any kind had consisted in remarkably well-formed feet and hands, and of these graceful appendages her Ladyship was still proud at sixty.

To irreproachably elegant manners, a tolerable knowledge of the small world in which she had moved, calling it, and believing it, the great world, and to a fair share of common sense, it

must be confessed that Lady Augusta added that deep-seated vulgarity of mind which is the inevitable product of a life spent in looking up to that on which we ought to look down; reverencing that which deserves no reverence, mistaking small things, and small people, for great things, and great people, and in contracting all thoughts and all feelings within the narrow circle of a paltry, yet arbitrary conventionalism.

Lady Juliana was ten years younger than her sister, and had never quite lost the habit acquired in early life, of looking up to her with a certain amount of respect and fear. She was herself a remarkably elegant looking women; tall, and was perhaps somewhat too thin, but she still retained, both in form and feature, considerable traces of her former beauty. She had a fair pale forehead of that peculiar form, which though high, is so narrow as to impart no indication of intellect; a large pale blue eye, a clear and delicate complexion, and that delicately small conformation of the lower part of the face which, though in youth it may be termed pretty, is an unfailing index of weakness of character.

In disposition she would have been better, had she been happier. This approaches perhaps a

little to the dictum of the critic, who pronounced that the picture would have been better if the painter had taken more pains with it. And of which of us may not the same be said? But truly, in the case of poor Lady Juliana, it might be declared that all her bad qualities arose from her false position in the world.

She was a blighted plant. All her life had been a mistake. Nature had certainly intended her to suckle fools, and not to have anything to chronicle.

Had she married in her own station, and produced a few noble little creatures in her own likeness to suckle, it would have brought out all the gentleness, tenderness, and love of her soft nature; and who knows whether, as a mother, that soft weak nature might not have been strengthened into a capability of self-sacrifice and devotion? As it was, poor soul! there was no active good in her at all, and continual discomfort and discontent, together with vexations and vain regrets, engendered but too much active ill in the shape of acerbity, irritation, and uncharitableness. In a word all that mixed result of *ennui*, peevishness, and disappoint-

ment, which the self-deluded lady consoled herself by calling "her religious feelings."

Lady Juliana was reclining, when the gentlemen entered, in an elegant attitude, on a *chaise longue* on one side of the fire; for, May as it was, and a lovely May-day as it had been, luxurious Londoners still welcomed the cheerful aspect of a fire in the evening. A little table stood at her elbow, beside which sat Miss Mary Jane Wigginsville, the youngest of the three spinster sisters. These two ladies were in very close, and apparently very interesting conversation across the little table, the diminutive dimensions of which permitted their *tête-à-tête* to be perfectly confidential.

Miss Mary Jane Wigginsville had not fully attained the completion of her thirtieth year, but she was very near having done so; and like all other unwedded ladies, she felt it to be an important era. Small and very delicate features, large light-coloured eyes, an oval face, a beautiful complexion, and a very abundant decoration of long and almost flaxen ringlets, gave to this *cadette* of the house of Wigginsville very fair claims in the eyes of many to be considered as a very pretty woman.

There was considerable congeniality of tastes and pursuits between these two ladies; and although their tempers were widely different—for there was not an atom of either sour or bitter in the disposition of Miss Mary Jane—they were very intimate.

On the opposite side of the fire-place, Lady Augusta was sitting in a deep *bergère*, in which she had fallen asleep over a meditation on the best means of securing the presence of the Duchess of Benlomond at a large party which she shortly intended to give.

Miss Jemina Wigginsville, who was five years older than Miss Mary Jane and very like her, save that these five years had left their disagreeable traces on her once beautiful complexion, turning delicate pink to dingy red, was seated with Kate at a large round table in the centre of the room, where they were turning over picture-books, and chattering away at a great rate.

We must now introduce Miss Hannah Wigginsville to the reader, or more properly speaking Miss Wigginsville, *par excellence*.

This lady was the daughter of the late Mr. Wigginsville by his first wife; his marriage with

the mother of the before-named two ladies having been contracted much later in life, and after he had retired from business. There was probably not less than twenty years difference between the age of the eldest Miss Wigginsville and that of her youngest sister, for Miss Hannah must certainly have been fifty years old at the time of which we are now speaking. Not that any uncertainty on the point can have arisen from any wish on her part to conceal her age; for Miss Hannah would not have given a farthing for the power of mystifying the whole world upon the subject. For though she was not perhaps quite without pretension, of more kinds than one, she was by no means one of those unlucky females who consider juvenility as the greatest of blessings while present, and the most indispensable of fictions when past.

On the contrary, Miss Hannah, with her tall large bulky person, her short scratchy "front," her large massive forehead, and her never-absent spectacles, would utterly have scorned any soft impeachment of the kind.

She was now sitting exactly in front of the fire, with one knee crossed in somewhat masculine fashion over the other, and reading the

"Quarterly Review," which she had coaxed Kate to fetch for her from her father's study. Such was the manner in which the ladies of the party were distributed when the four gentlemen from the dining-room made their appearance among them.

CHAPTER VI.

The entrance of the gentlemen of course made a complete revolution in the arrangement of the whole party.

Lady Augusta waked, opened her eyes, stared at them all, and asked whether it were not getting rather late. The other ladies all moved a little, more or less, and looked as if they were holding themselves in readiness to form themselves into new groups if required to do so.

The Doctor after taking his coffee placed himself in a chair, before the round table, saying: "Now then, Caldwell, let us have a look at your drawings." Whereupon Kate, and Miss Jemima, being already seated at the same table, naturally joined themselves to the Doctor and Mr. Caldwell, apparently for the purpose of

enjoying a renewed exhibition of the young engineer's very admirable drawings.

Henry Harrington drew a chair to the side of Miss Hannah, with whom he knew himself to be a sort of a favourite, though he was always quizzing her, and "drawing her out," as he called it.

But the real fact was, that in the frequent sharp encounters of their wits, Miss Hannah had a tolerably comfortable conviction that she had no reason to consider herself the vanquished, victimized or most bequizzed party, but rather the contrary; and perhaps Miss Hannah was not altogether wrong.

In this state of affairs, Mr. White, unfortunate young man! saw himself in imminent danger of having again to expose himself to all the horrors of a *tête-à-tête* with the awful Lady Augusta; for Lady Juliana and Miss Mary Jane seemed evidently determined to continue their conversation apart. Anything, he thought, was better than this; so, although he knew that Lady Juliana had a particular dislike to him, and that he was sure to meet with something disagreeable by addressing her, he bravely marched up to the two serious ladies, and with all the bold-

ness of desperation commenced the conversation by asking Lady Juliana where she had been passing her Sunday.

"I was permitted the great privilege of passing it at Highworth, Mr. White," replied her Ladyship, "where, as I have just been remarking to Miss Wigginsville, the sheep never have to leave the fold in search of food, Mr. White." The latter part of her speech being added with a dry stiffness which was meant to convey a crushing reproof.

Poor White, whose very narrow and uniform path in life had led him quite away from those social latitudes in which the language now used by Lady Juliana was current, and who moreover was really as simple and single-minded as a child, replied with much enthusiasm:

"Ah, Lady Juliana! if you feel it a privilege to get out of the smoke, think what it would be to me! I, you know, who have been panting here from week's end to week's end, without ever smelling country air! But I did not know that the system of feeding which you and Miss Wigginsville have been discussing had been tried in that part of the country. I have heard of it in Lincolnshire, but had no idea that any-

thing of the kind had been tried near London."

And hereupon Miss Mary Jane permitted herself the worldliness of a very modified half suppressed titter, which however she brought into proper keeping as to time, place, and her companions, by letting it glide imperceptibly into a sigh, while a very seraphic upcast glance of her large blue eyes served the double purpose of exhibiting them to the sinner as he stood looking down at her, and at the same time manifesting a due sense of the enormity of his sinfulness.

"What *can* you mean, Mr. White?" demanded her Ladyship, with more of hauteur, however, than of anger; for there was something soothing and agreeable to her feelings in the mental attitude of looking down upon the "outer court" sinner, from the conscious elevation of her own godliness. "What can you mean, Sir? And what system do you allude to?"

"I beg pardon, your Ladyship," said poor Jonas, beginning to perceive that he had made some great mistake, and for what he knew, poor man! might perhaps have fallen into some grievous sin against good-breeding, or etiquette.

"I beg pardon, I am sure. You must excuse me, but I thought that you and Miss Mary Jane had been speaking of the system of turnip feeding."

Poor little Mary Jane was again obliged to stifle a worldly titter with a deep and very godly sigh. And then she ventured to say:

"The manna of the word, Mr. White, and not turnips, was the food Lady Juliana was alluding to."

"Ah, Sir!" ejaculated Lady Juliana, after relieving her wounded feelings by a very awful groan; "ah, Sir! The faithful shepherd—"

And here her Ladyship went off into a metaphorical pastoral about good shepherds, and bad shepherds, and wolves, and sheep, and sheep-dogs, and sheep-folds, all very fine, and very spiritual, but at too great length to make it safe to follow her.

"I say, White," interrupted Henry Harrington from the other side of the hearth-rug, whence he had been talking with his friend, Miss Hannah. "Have you seen a pamphlet which Miss Wigginsville here has been telling me about? She says it is entitled 'The utility of our Cathedral Chapters, considered on the true

principles of supply and demand.' The name of the author it seems is Mr. Ricardo Macmalthus, and she says that she hears it has made a great sensation at Manchester and Glasgow. Have you heard of it, White?"

"No, Sir; never heard of it," said White, suddenly turning round, and inexpressibly relieved by being thus released from Lady Juliana and her fold. "But I really think it a very important and proper view of the subject, and I should say," he added thoughtfully, and as if pronouncing the result of a well-weighed calculation, "I should say it would take three times the number of minor-canonries that there are, to supply the demand for them satisfactorily."

Miss Hannah and Henry Harrington burst into a laugh at this somewhat exclusively professional mode of viewing the matter; and the spectacled spinster, who was a great political economist, undertook to explain the subject to him.

"Why really, Sir," said she, "I think you are likely enough to be right, if indeed you do not fall short in your estimate. But I suspect Macmalthus was thinking more of what might be the demand for canons, than for canonries."

"I am afraid we are broaching what the Governor would call very dangerous doctrines, eh, White?" said young Harrington.

"I don't exactly understand what is meant by a demand for canons," replied poor White, simply. "But the Church prays for a due supply of them, you know, included of course in the general prayer read at the University for a due supply of men fitted to serve God in Church and state."

The announcement of Mr. Garble at this moment fortunately put a stop to the conversation, before "the Governor" had become aware of the sort of ordeal which his worthy Curate was likely to be submitted to by his very graceless first-born, and his rather partially privileged guest, Miss Hannah; for had he been aware of it, he must have felt, to use that phrase so dear to tender consciences, that he owed it to himself to have testified his very decided disapprobation of them both.

CHAPTER VII.

Mr. James Garble, attorney-at-law, was a little undersized, slight-made, half starved-looking figure with a narrow face, having a sharp nose, and a cautious, cunning-looking mouth, the whole visage being attenuated and rat-like, but lit up by a pair of very bright piercing black eyes. He had moreover very brilliantly white teeth, and showed them often. But his smile was not a pleasing one; it was neither frank nor joyous.

Yet though all this can hardly be said to constitute an engaging individuality, few persons cast their eyes upon Mr. James Garble once, without being tempted by some feeling or other to take a second look. Was it that his high well-developed forehead imparted to this

otherwise mean face, that impress of intellect which never fails to command some degree of instinctive and involuntary observance?

As he saluted, one after the other, most of those assembled in the Doctor's drawing-room, there was nothing objectionable in his bearing or manner, unless indeed it were a tinge of that extra and studied politeness which occasionally marks the consciousness of being among persons felt to be of superior station.

He was no favourite of the Doctor's, though it would be difficult to say why he was not; unless indeed a sort of mutual antipathy may be supposed to have been generated by the excessive contrast of their respective persons; and this was certainly such as to place them at the opposite extremes of the species "homo." The Doctor must have weighed a good sixteen stone; Mr. Garble certainly not above eight. The Doctor's great sonorous voice resembled the small treble of the attorney considerably less than that of a mastiff does the sharp yelping of a lap-dog; and it really seemed strange that the huge square ruddy visage of the one, should belong to a being of the same species as the keen sallow features of the other.

"Good evening, Mr. Garble," said the Doctor, putting out his right hand to him over his shoulder, as he sat with his left holding the drawing he was examining.

"Good evening, Sir," replied the other in a tone of much less indifference, and receiving the hand thus placed within his reach with something of a reverential air. And then glancing at the drawings which were occupying the reverend gentleman's attention, he added, after the pause of a moment: "What indefatigable mental powers you must possess, Dr. Harrington! After the great fatigues of such a day as this, it is really extraordinary that you should still feel sufficient energy to occupy yourself with works of art!"

Mr. Caldwell glanced towards the attorney's face, thinking for a moment that he was venturing to banter the reverend dignitary; but he read nothing there but deep admiration and reverence.

Having administered this little bit of adulation to the Doctor, Mr. Garble glided noiselessly across the room, bowing low to the chair in which Lady Augusta was again sleeping, to the little table beside which Lady

Juliana and Miss Mary Jane were still talking with every appearance of earnestness.

Here he ventured to draw a chair and seat himself, and then to enter into conversation with them both in a *sotto voce* style of confidential intimacy, which plainly indicated that there was some sort of tie between the trio beyond that which existed between the little attorney and any other individuals of the party. That such a tie existed is quite certain, and its strength will be readily understood when it is stated that it was furnished by the community of their religious feelings. For Mr. Garble was one of the elect, having been fortunate enough to have had a "call."

We might perhaps safely leave the reader to form his own notions respecting Mr. Garble and his call, but on the whole we prefer making no mystery about the matter, and therefore state at once the plain truth, namely, that Miss Mary Jane Wigginsville had been made the means of grace to the regenerated attorney.

It was perfectly well known to all men whom it might concern, and to many whom it might not, that the late Mr. Wigginsville, *ci-devant* Wiggins, had left above a hundred

thousand pounds to his daughters, and accordingly the three ladies resided in the aristocratic neighbourhood of St. Martin's in a style that might well indicate the possession of three or four thousand a-year. A handsome house, a handsome equipage, a good deal of society, a costly style of dress, at least in the juniors, and a yearly autumnal excursion to some fashionable watering-place, showed plainly enough that their expenditure could not fall far short of that income. But beyond this, nothing was known among their friends and neighbours about their pecuniary concerns.

They had migrated from the far east upon the death of their father, and had found little or no difficulty in forming a very agreeable set of acquaintances among the western tribes, in whose precincts they had ventured to settle themselves.

Mr. Garble was one of the individuals whose interest and friendly feelings they had the most rapidly awakened among their new acquaintance; and he, as well as some few others, had thought it best to settle all doubts and fears concerning their respectability, by at once ascertaining the real state of the case from the best

authority. The unerring archives of Doctors' Commons were applied to, and sundry monies were pocketed by the functionaries thereof in return for the indubitable information that Joseph Wigginsville, &c. &c. &c. bequeathed all the property of which he died possessed, consisting of a dwelling-house situated so and so, together with whatever amount of monies in the three per cent. consols which might belong to him at the time of his decease, to his three daughters, Hannah, Jemima, and Mary Jane in equal portions.

This will was dated only five days before the old gentleman's death, so there could be no doubt or mistake about the matter.

The very marked difference in the character of the three ladies made this little investigation peculiarly necessary in the case of any Cœlebs in search of a dowered wife; for the style of wooing adopted for the entanglement of Miss Hannah's affections would have been altogether inefficacious when brought to bear upon the feelings of the scientific Miss Jemima; while the deepest devotion to every "ology" and "ism" under the sun, would have been worse than thrown away upon Miss Mary Jane.

It may easily be supposed that the three well-to-do sisters were not left to waste their sweetness, and that of their handsome income upon the desert air of a solitude unpeopled with pretenders to the honour of their alliance. They were not among the number of fair ones left to sing, "Nobody coming to marry me, nobody coming to woo!" Many came to woo, and to marry also, if they could manage it.

But every suitor found it absolutely necessary to single out at once from the group the object of his intended adorations. Each sportsman had to mark his bird. It would by no means do to take the chances which might arise from blazing away at the whole covey at once; nor was there the remotest possibility that one head might by mere luck be bagged when another was shot at.

The three ladies really lived together in very perfect sisterly harmony and good understanding with each other; but nevertheless each very decidedly took her own course, and followed her own line across the thoroughfare of life. Moreover they each kept a hobby of their own, and they all rode hard.

And thus it naturally came to pass that each

lady had her own set of attendants, adherents, admirers, and hangers-on.

All were received, however, with equal hospitality and politeness at the frequent evening *réunions* which took place in the Wigginsville drawing-rooms; not but what it was perfectly well known amongst them for whose sake individually the most assiduous guests made their appearance there. In fact there was no more risk that the "following" of one sister should be confounded with or mistaken for the "following" of another, than that a blunder should be made between the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, and the fishes of the sea.

It had become necessary, therefore, for our friend Mr. Garble at an early period of his acquaintance with these interesting ladies, to make up his mind as to the most promising mode of turning this acquaintance to account. He speedily felt the necessity of submitting to the general rule thus enforced upon all the friends of the house of Wigginsville, and it had been a matter of much deep consideration with him under which of the three banners he should enrol himself.

He would for several reasons very greatly

have preferred leaving the question for some time open. But this he soon found would be impossible; and so, after very earnest though but short deliberation, he became "serious" and displayed himself openly as a Mary-Janite. This choice, though of necessity made rapidly, was grounded on very solid considerations. In the first place, the assumption of the "serious" colour might not improbably prove a good speculation in a professional point of view, for it was a notorious fact that the leading attorney in that particular neighbourhood was a decided Tractarian, and there was certainly, at that moment, a very good opening for a "serious" practitioner. It was a notorious fact also, that in these days high church families employ high church butchers and bakers, and that low church families employ low church butchers and bakers, and it could not be doubted that both parties were likely to select their legal advisers upon the same system.

This was, as of course it ought to have been, a very strong argument in favour of displaying himself to the eyes of all men either high or low.

And another reason for his deciding upon

immediately becoming " serious," was the much greater facility of preparing himself for it, than he should find in getting up the necessary stock of talk in either of the departments of worldly wisdom to which the two elder sisters had devoted themselves. He felt in short that it would be easier for him to become a saint, according to the rites and ceremonies enjoined by Miss Mary Jane and her friends, than a deeply-read political economist of Miss Hannah's school, or a natural philosopher with Miss Jemima. Moreover, his natural sagacity led him to suspect that the heart of the youngest lady was by its nature more easily impressionable than the hearts of her sisters. Besides all this we must do him the justice to admit, that he did certainly remember and allow some weight to the consideration that Miss Mary Jane was not only the youngest and best-looking of the three, but that she really was very pretty, while her sisters were as certainly not pretty at all.

So that in truth the wooing of Mr. Garble, though entered upon in a decidedly business-like spirit, was not altogether a disagreeable business.

On the present occasion, however, it had to

be carried on almost entirely by looks, and amatory sighs; for although Lady Juliana would not have objected to any amount of pious *double entendre* about love, and the spirit which, constitutes the flirtation of the elect, and to which "serious" phraseology so happily lends itself, she would not have tolerated, despite her fifty years, that the whole of such heavenly-minded tenderness of feeling should have been appropriated entirely by Miss Mary Jane.

The clever little attorney therefore, in order to turn the present opportunity to the best profit, was obliged to divide his soft and piously-worded cajoleries as dexterously as he could between his two gentle listeners, and trust to the language of the eyes, and all the other eloquent little asides with which mankind are all, more or less, familiar, in order to make the younger lady understand how exclusively the meaning of every tender sound he uttered, was for her.

Before long, however, the appearance of the tea equipage broke up the different coteries into which the party had divided themselves. Lady Augusta roused herself, and taking her place at the tea-table, said to her husband:

"Well, my dear, what did your brother say to you in the letter I sent down to you by Kate this morning?"

The Doctor started.

"Upon my word," he exclaimed, "I had entirely forgotten it! The fact is, that at the moment you sent it to me this morning, I was on the very point of starting for church. I had no time to look at it then, and, to say the truth, I have never thought of it since. Kate, my love, be so kind as to bring it to me from my study. You will find it on the mantel-piece."

Kate vanished, and re-appeared again in a wonderfully short space of time, and quietly glided back to her place as soon as she had put the forgotten letter in her father's hand; but if she flattered herself that the conversation which had been interrupted by her leaving the room was to be resumed upon her return to it, she was disappointed; for the thoughts of all present were speedily turned into a new current, and that so effectually as to render the recurrence to any former theme quite impossible.

CHAPTER VIII.

SCARCELY had the Doctor perused half a dozen lines of his letter before he exclaimed:

"God bless me, Lady Augusta! It is indeed fortunate that you recalled this letter to my recollection. Why, Walter has returned to England, my dear! He must be in London now; and as far as I can make out will in all probability be here this evening. What in the world are we to do?"

"Do, Doctor Harrington? Of course we can do nothing at this time of night," replied Lady Augusta, with very unmistakeable manifestations of not being particularly delighted at this sudden invasion of her dominions. "Do you really suppose that your brother can expect

to find us prepared to receive him for the night at such very short notice as he has thought proper to give us? Even if his letter had not been so unluckily forgotten all these hours, it would have been strangely abrupt. I really think it is impossible!"

"My dear Lady Augusta!" replied the worthy divine, with sundry symptoms of uneasiness, "I fear there is no doubt about the matter. Just hear, my dear, what he says in his letter," and then he read as follows:

"My dear Harry,

"I reached Liverpool this morning, and I am now going to the Museum, which I am told contains some specimens which I particularly wish to examine. I purpose leaving this place to-morrow by a train which they say will reach London by nine P.M. I have neglected to keep a note of your London address, and therefore enclose this to my friend and agent, Thackley of Threadneedle Street, who will forward it to your residence without delay. You will doubtless be surprised at my unlooked-for return to Europe—but more of this when we meet, which

I hope will be in time for going to roost Sunday night.

Your affectionate brother,

"WALTER HARRINGTON."

"Decidedly there is no mistake about the matter," said young Harrington; "and if he has not jumped out of the railway-carriage, *en route* in pursuit of some butterfly or tom-tit, which by all I can learn of my venerable uncle and his habits, is not unlikely; but, if he escape the temptation, it appears to me highly probable that I may have the advantage of making his personal acquaintance in a minute or two."

"In truth, Harry," said the Doctor, pulling out his watch, "it is just about time for him to be here."

"Well, I must say, that I think it would have been kinder, to use no other word," said Lady Augusta, "if Mr. Harrington had either given us a rather longer notice of his approach, or had taken up his quarters for one night at least, at an hotel."

"It would surely have been more decent too," murmured Lady Juliana, with freezing propriety, "not to have broken the Sabbath by

this evidently unnecessary journey, even if Mr. Harrington be so unhappy as not to be influenced by any higher motive."

"There's a carriage at the door," cried young Harrington. "It brings our long-lost relative, I am quite sure."

In another instant, the deep sonorous baying of a large hound, as it seemed, was heard reverberating through the entire house, and almost shaking the walls with the unwonted echo. A few more minutes, and a heavy tread was heard on the stairs, and the door of the drawing-room was opened for the admittance of Mr. Walter Harrington.

The unsatisfactory termination of the Rev. Dr. Ponsonby's attempts to make a scholar of Walter Harrington, and the subsequent departure of the boy for Australia at the age of fourteen, is probably still fresh in the recollection of the reader. From that period to the summer in which our narrative commences, and which witnessed the completion of his seventy-first year, Walter Harrington had never been in England, nor indeed in Europe, save once. Yet all these years had not been passed by him as a sheep-farmer in Australia.

Circumstances had occurred in the interval which had very materially altered the position of the young emigrant, and that too while he was still far from being an old man. About twenty years after his departure for the Antipodes, his young cousin, the heir of the family estate, sickened and died. His uncle, who had never had a second child, and was then an old man, did not very long survive his son, and Walter succeeded to the property, his own father having died about two years before.

It might have been expected, that the thriving Australian sheep-farmer, now that he had become one of the landed aristocracy of the old country, and owner of some thousands per annum, would have hastened to take his place among the fortunate few of the old world.

But this, however generally expected by his connexions in England, did not take place, nor would it have taken place even if the inheritance had fallen to him earlier, for it would have been nearly impossible at any period of his life, that Walter Harrington could have settled down into a quiet, stay-at-home country gentleman.

The same restless activity and imaginative

excitability which had impelled him as a boy to range the fields, when he should have been seated at his desk, impelled him still to range the fields; and the Robinson Crusoe infection which he had received in boyhood had never been eradicated.

Not that the acquisition of his inheritance was in any degree unwelcome or indifferent to him, for it enabled him to extend his wanderings unchecked over almost every part of Earth's surface, and these wanderings had formed his occupation, and the history of his life for the last thirty years.

Immediately upon hearing that the well-remembered woods and meadows of Stanton had become his own, he disposed of his flocks and wider extent of acres amid the virgin forests of the new world, and hurried home to have one look at the well-remembered scenes, and to arrange the business necessarily arising out of this acquisition of property; and this done, he started on a course of wide-world travel, the wanderings of which now brought him once again to his native land.

It must not, however, be inferred from this statement that his years had literally been spent

like those of the Wandering Jew, in perpetual change of place without ever resting for two nights together in the same spot. He could not have been the same man he was, had this been so.

Walter Harrington had found time and opportunity amidst the immense variety of scenes he had passed through, to read much, and to think and examine more; but his studies had all been of the kind which the natural bent of his mind dictated, and referred almost wholly to those external aspects of Nature, which his widely-extended acquaintance with her had made especially interesting to him.

He had become a profound, as well as an enthusiastic botanist and zoologist. Entomology and ornithology were perhaps his favourite pages in the great encylopedia of Nature, and as an active cultivator of those departments of science he was well known to the learned societies both of London and Paris, though personally a stranger in both; and the name of Walter Harrington ranked among their most valuable corresponding members.

Of pretty nearly any other knowledge he was almost as ignorant as a child, and of all sorts

of etiquette, conventionalities, habits of acting, and modes of thinking, which make up civilized social life, he was more ignorant than most children.

That noble largeness of mind, however, and that peculiar directness and singleness in every intellectual operation, which always results from conversing with Nature, more than with Man, was especially his.

Deeply rooted also in the foundations of his mind was a pervading sentiment of that true and sublime piety, and that heartfelt adoration of the Creator, which is sure to spring from the same source. His readings in the great book of Nature, which all nations and all creeds of men must admit to contain an indisputable revelation of the laws and the will of God, had taught him that *good*, physical and moral, is the normal condition of all that He has created, and that *evil* is the abnormal condition of the same ; and he had faith unbounded in the ultimate godlike destiny of the immortal soul.

The tone of mind and feeling which had thus become habitual in the old naturalist, produced in him a most large and abounding charity towards all the follies, faults, and frailties of

humanity; for his genuine *bonâ-fide* persuasion, that no sin or error, great or small, can by possibility escape its accurately measured quantum of painful consequences, caused him habitually, and almost involuntarily, to comtemplate the erring with pity rather than with anger.

But if it be desirable that the reader should really become acquainted with the moral and intellectual peculiarities of Mr. Walter Harrington, it may be better to leave them to develop themselves in the course of the narrative, lest any farther attempt at psychological portraiture of him should cause our song to become a sermon.

So we will now direct our attention to the lighter matters of his outward man, as he appeared when, at the age of seventy-one, he arrived at the house of his brother, the Warden.

He was about six feet in height, being a trifle taller than his younger brother, and was probably also a heavier man than the Doctor, although much thinner: for his breadth of shoulders was immense, and the limbs and whole frame-work of the man were in proportion.

The face, and all the features in it, were large also, but totally free from everything like heavi-

ness. A noble massive forehead, high, broad and square, surmounted it. Large, bushy, black eyebrows sheltered a pair of finely opened large blue eyes, bright with intelligence, and laughing with joyous frankness.

The large mouth was filled with a magnificent set of teeth, almost in as good repair as they had been half a century ago. His complexion was deeply tanned, by long exposure to the sun and wind of many a clime, to a fine ruddy brown, and though not free from wrinkles, showed that clear purity of skin which more perhaps than any other peculiarity indicates well-preserved health.

But the greatest peculiarity of Mr. Walter Harrington's appearance was his hair. Abundant as that of his brother, he wore it very much longer, so long indeed, that it fell in huge wavy locks almost upon his shoulders; but unlike the Doctor's, which was silvery, the original black was only mingled with a sufficient quantity of white to produce the general appearance of a very dark iron-grey.

He was still as upright as an arrow, and trod, though not quite so lightly, yet still with almost as much vigour and alertness as he had ever

done, and very decidedly with more than half the Londoners of forty displayed.

His voice was of the same sonorous quality as that of the Warden, but entirely free from the thick huskiness which the burly fatness of the portly divine had imparted to his. The sort of pompous slowness of delivery too, which well enough became the position and character of the ecclesiastical dignitary, was changed in the case of the elder brother for a jovial frankness of manner which was irresistible, and which sufficed to atone to most persons, even in the most refined society, for the rather startling body of sound which was apt to issue from the capacious chest of the magnificent old man.

In a word, Walter Harrington, in his seventy-first year, was one of the finest old men ever seen, notwithstanding the peculiarities of his dress, which in one or two respects was certainly not exactly such as old gentlemen of seventy, with several thousands a-year, are in the habit of wearing in this country.

A huge pair of leggings, made of dark pepper and salt cloth, and fitting tightly from ankle to knee, encased his mighty lower limbs; while his body was clothed with a sort of frock

of the same material, bound round the waist with a girdle of leather some six inches broad, to which were attached a variety of pockets and pouches, of different size and various construction.

Over the collar of this frock, which buttoned close round the throat, fell a deep shirt-collar of very white and fine linen; while a strangely incongruous look of dandyism was produced by broad wristbands of the same material turned back over the sleeves of the frock which buttoned closely at the wrists.

The same Brummel-like appreciation for "fine linen, and plenty of it," showed itself also on his broad chest, where the frock opened, permitting this under garment to be visible, almost to his girdle. A very broad-brimmed, low-crowned hat upon his head completed his costume.

The sensations of the party assembled in Doctor Harrington's drawing-room were very various when, after a moment spent in expectation, the door was flung back against the wall, and this long-lost relative made his appearance, closely followed by an enormous and very handsome dog of the huge Labrador breed.

One stride brought him to the spot where his brother was standing.

The reverend dignitary's soft white hand was grasped in the huge iron palm of the wanderer, and the tea-things rung upon the table with the reverberations of the cordial, "Harry, my boy! how are you?" with which he greeted this astonished and almost stunned brother, while his left hand and arm administered to the startled divine something between an embrace and a slap on the back.

The Doctor sank into a chair which stood near the table, as soon as he could fairly disengage himself from his brother's circling arm, and for a minute or two was utterly unable to speak from violent coughing, and positive want of breath. As soon as he possibly could, however, he said, while he leaned with his elbow on the table, and the water streamed from his eyes:

"My dear brother!—ugh!—ugh!—ugh! This is very dangerous doctrine—ugh!—ugh! —ugh!—very dangerous practice, I mean! I am most happy to see you—ah!—ah!—ah! But I never was so strong as you, you know, Walter; and to say the truth, my habits have

not fitted me for such violent . . . . pastimes," he added, after vainly seeking some more appropriate term.

"Ah! you gentlemen of England who live at home at ease—" returned his brother, looking round him; but what he might have said further remains unknown, for his friend and follower Faust, as he called his noble dog, was causing as much sensation in another part of the room, as his master had done, and of a somewhat similar kind. On their first entering the room, Faust had gravely and far more quietly than his noisy master, proceeded to make a detailed and careful investigation of all the circumstances of the new world to which he found himself introduced. He had received with dignified self-possession the salutation of "fine fellow!" from Kate, nor had he shrunk from rather a cordial caress from Mr. Caldwell. He had solemnly sniffed round the chair from which Lady Augusta had risen to welcome her brother-in-law, and had silently received a pat on the head both from Henry Harrington and Miss Hannah.

So far all was well; but unfortunately his onward march brought him to the group con-

sisting of Lady Juliana, Miss Mary Jane, and Mr. Garble, and here his investigations assumed a more active and accurate character. The Lady Juliana was the only one of the party who still kept her seat, not deeming it necessary to incur the fatigue of rising from it, till it should come to her turn to receive the greetings of her brother-in-law.

Now, whether it were that the abundantly pomatumed and perfumed ringlets of the noble spinster had attracted the attention of Faust, or whether her reclining attitude had excited his curiosity to discover whether she were asleep or dead, it is impossible to say; but certain it is, that the huge beast suddenly, yet very deliberately, raised himself on his hind legs, and, placing his fore-paws on the lady's uncovered shoulders, set about diligently examining with his nose every part of her *coiffure*.

It must be owned that the attack was an alarming one for an elderly London lady; for the enormous weight of the dog did really, and without any affectation at all, nearly overset her backwards. Nevertheless it certainly was not necessary, nor very reasonable, that it should call forth the rapid succession of crescendo

screams that were now uttered by her Ladyship.

An immediate exclamation of "Faust, Sir, come to heel!" shouted by his master in the tone and key that had been wont to make the primeval forests ring, instantly caused the obedient animal to withdraw himself, and crouch at his master's feet.

But the mischief to the lady's nervous system was not so easily repaired. It was indeed some time before the united assiduities of the other ladies assembled round her, were able definitively to ward off the alternate threatenings of hysterics and fainting fits; but when at length she was sufficiently restored to composure to permit anger to take the place of terror, she turned her eyes on the huge offender with no very gentle or forgiving look.

Mr. Harrington, who certainly at first had been rather inclined to laugh at the assault his favourite had committed, now stood in utter astonishment at the effect it had produced; but when at length there appeared to be a possibility of speaking to the terrified and offended lady, he approached her, saying, that had he not well known the dog to be as gentle as a

lamb, he should not have brought him into the house, and that she need not be under the slightest alarm in case a similar accident should occur again.

"Occur again, Sir!" cried the outraged lady, with a strongly accentuated expression of indignant astonishment, "I trust, Sir, that you will not dream of further tempting Providence by suffering the creature to live. Surely, after the merciful escape I have had—and I pray God most fervently that I may recognise, as I ought, with due thankfulness the special mercy shown therein!—surely, Sir, you will not tempt Providence any further? Surely you will think it right to have the dangerous beast shot immediately?"

"*Shot*, Madam!" returned the old man, with a sudden and rather portentous contraction of his bushy black eyebrows. But immediately recovering his look of open-hearted good humour, he added: "Pooh, pooh! you are joking. No, we won't shoot Faust, but he shall undergo a punishment almost as terrible; he shall be turned out of the room, and sit without daring to move on the staircase."

And so saying, he opened the door, and an-

nounced his sentence to the obedient beast, who forthwith obeyed with an air of unmistakable penitence, and consciousness of disgrace. But despite this atonement, those of the party who best knew the Lady Juliana felt no doubt respecting the nature of her feelings, both towards the dog and his master.

The three Miss Wigginsvilles now discreetly arose and took their leave; Mr. Garble too jumped up, as in duty bound, to lead them to their carriage, and also made his parting bow. And then Mr. Caldwell, having promised Kate to call in the morning to examine the site of her proposed conservatory, and pronounce his opinion of the practicability of her scheme, also took his leave, and the family party were left to themselves.

CHAPTER IX.

THEN came all the hospitable inquiries from Lady Augusta and the Doctor as to what the traveller would have to eat, together with a *sotto voce* discussion as to what might be in the house, &c.; and her Ladyship was again a little startled by hearing her guest, when pressed to say what sort of refreshment he would prefer, reply:

"Anything, my dear sister—anything you will. Give me a broiled turkey, if you like it."

The good gentleman had quite forgotten that turkeys do not run about London streets as they do about the homesteads on the other side of the Atlantic, and was perfectly ignorant that the *improvisé* supper he had selected as the easiest and simplest in the whole bill of fare known to

him, was, under the existing circumstances, rather an *exigeant* one.

The lady was in fact obliged to confess that she feared there was no such thing as a turkey in the house, and, being Sunday, it was impossible to get one.

Then followed a discussion concerning the best arrangements that could be made about a bed for him, and very civil regrets were expressed on the part of her Ladyship that the shortness of the notice precluded the possibility of her doing all she could wish for his accommodation; and again her nerves were doomed to endure a shock that made her inwardly shudder from head to foot, by a proposal from the hardy old traveller that he should have "a shake-down in the room they were in."

"Merciful Heaven! a shake-down for an old man and his dog in her amber satin drawing-room! Must not the being be an absolute savage who could propose it?"

Such assuredly was her thoughts; but all she said was, gently, though with a slight touch of despair in her accent, "that she trusted they might think of some plan more convenient than that."

A short muttered conversation then followed between Kate and her mother, which ended by the young lady's saying, with a pretty mixture of frankness and timidity, that if her uncle would accept a bed in a very tiny bed-room it would be a great pleasure to her, as she herself could sleep perfectly well on the large sofa which stood in her mother's dressing-room.

Uncle Walter of course protested against any such arrangement; but Kate persisted so earnestly, and the sincerity of her wish that he should accept her offer was so evident, that he yielded, and so the matter was arranged; and then Kate led him off, while his supper was being prepared, to show him his quarters, and herself do the honours of her own little territory.

This was in truth a labour of love, for Kate was rather proud of her dominions; and somehow or other, she already felt that she should take more pleasure in showing her books, and her music, and her drawings, and all her other treasures, to this great, rough, stranger uncle, than to all the rest of her kinsfolk and acquaintance.

There is no way of accounting for this, save by the mysterious doctrine of sympathy.

It was but little that Kate knew, or had ever heard, of her uncle, for it was very little that any of her family could tell her about him. The one fact, that he was known to the scientific world as a great traveller and naturalist, comprised pretty nearly all she knew concerning him; yet certain it is, that before they returned to the drawing-room, Kate and her uncle were very fast friends.

Moreover, she had actually confided to him the great conservatory project, into which he entered, heart and soul; and she told him, moreover, that Mr. Caldwell was coming to-morrow to pronounce his opinion on the feasibility of the construction. And she mentioned, too, that this Mr. Caldwell was an officer in the Engineers, and reckoned by every one to be particularly clever, and quite a man of science. And then she added, that he was also considered by everybody, she believed, as extremely agreeable. Nor was the eccentric old uncle blind to the fact that his beautiful niece looked more beautiful still, as she said all this, and that the delicate colour in her cheeks became perceptibly heightened.

The *genus* young lady, was a branch of

zoology which the old bachelor had enjoyed very few opportunities of studying. But he noted these phenomena in his mind.

The *habitat* of the pretty creature he was studying afforded him great interest and satisfaction, for, to say the truth, Kate's cell appeared to him the only part of the house he had seen which promised any of the comforts of existence. Not only were there books, music, and drawing materials, but there were also indications of their being used.

In the drawing-room the pianoforte was closed, and no sign, in the shape of music-books, that it was ever open. Not a book of any kind was to be seen there, save that one number of the "Quarterly," which Miss Hannah had, with her usual audacity, contrived to extract from the Doctor's study.

But here, on the contrary, all that he saw seemed for use, and in use; so that Kate and her uncle returned to the drawing-room, as I have already stated, fast friends.

"I have been telling Kate," said Mr. Harrington, as he re-entered the drawing-room, "that I shall really be ashamed of myself for appropriating what appears to be evidently the

best quarters in the house; but she won't listen to me, and so I suppose I must submit."

"Upon my word, Walter," said the Doctor, looking at him, "I think that any one would take you to be twenty years my junior, instead of being my senior. But care and grave responsibilities will tell; and an over-laboured brain," he added, shaking his head with a sigh of resignation, "will bleach the hair that covers it."

"And learning, too, Harry! You know," returned Walter, while his eyes laughed gaily, "all the learning they crammed into you must, I am very sure, help a good deal in making a man old before his time. You remember, Harry, don't you? how steadfastly I refused to swallow poor old Ponsonby's doses of Greek"

"In truth, the sword sometimes will wear out the scabbard, Walter," rejoined the Doctor. "Incessant mental labour of all kinds cannot be expected to leave the body at seventy, in such a state of health and perfect preservation as it is evident you enjoy. It is only one more instance of the domination of mind over matter."

And the Doctor said this very solemnly, with his fat husky voice, as he crossed his hands resignedly upon his rotund stomach.

"True, brother," returned the elder Harrington, in a very grave tone, but with a merry twinkle in his eye; "but you must take as much care of yourself as you can. And, by the way, what hours do you keep, Harry? when do you go to bed?"

"Oh! we are early people, we generally get to bed by midnight; and Hutchinson always brings me my hot water at nine, for the breakfast is punctually on the table at ten."

"That's what you call early, is it?" said the other, with genuine surprise. "If I don't get my first draught of morning air within half an hour after the sun gets up, it never seems to me to be fresh enough. And what do you do with hot water, Harry, at that time in the morning?"

"Do with it?" returned the Doctor, staring at him, "why wash and shave, to be sure. What do you do?"

"Why I jump into the coldest bath I can get," returned the senior, laughing.

"What, in winter?" said the shivering Doctor aghast.

"Winter and summer, seed-time and harvest, every morning of my life if I can possibly

manage it," said Walter, finishing his supper as he spoke by tossing off a tumbler of water.

"You have taken no wine, brother," said the Doctor. "You will find that sherry excellent."

"I have not the least doubt of it, Harry; but I never drink wine," was the reply. "Do you use it much?" added Walter, glancing at the Warden's rubicund visage.

"But little," replied the reverend gentleman gravely. "I very seldom take above a glass, or at most two, at luncheon, and very rarely exceed a pint at dinner."

"Well," returned the senior, after the pause of a moment, "to tell you the truth, Harry, I rather wonder that the scabbard has lasted so well, if that is the treatment you give it. But now before going to bed I must beg your indulgence, Lady Augusta, for a companion of my journey who is not quite so hardy as I am, and who cannot do without the luxury of a fire at night."

"My dear brother, I had no idea that you had any one with you," cried the Doctor, rather uneasily. "I fear that we have not the means of accommodating any—"

"Oh! she will share my room," returned the elder brother, laughing; "or if not, she will do capitally well in Kate's cell, if she has only a fire in the room—that's the great point."

"Some wretched Indian woman!" thought the Doctor, greatly shocked, and equally embarrassed and surprised at this utter disregard of decency; and he was meditating in very awkward silence how best to point out to him the impossibility of his consenting to receive such an inmate, when Walter added:

"I should like to show her to you. I'll have her brought up here;" and before his brother could interfere to prevent his purpose, he had opened the door, and ran down stairs into the hall.

The Doctor and the Doctor's wife looked at each other in dismay; and young Harrington and Kate looked at each other and laughed; while Lady Juliana sat muttering that she was not the least surprised, and that nothing better could be expected from one who travelled on a Sunday, when Mr. Harrington re-entered, followed by a couple of men-servants carrying a large deal box about four feet square, which by

the old gentleman's direction they placed on the floor.

The party round him exchanged glances, expressive both of astonishment and dismay, but waited in perfect silence for what was to follow, Mr. Harrington the while occupying himself busily in preparing to open the case.

"I was determined that you should be the first to see her," said he, affectionately; "and she will be presented to-morrow, I hope."

"Presented! Brother Walter," cried the agitated Doctor, "what *are* you talking about? and what *do* you mean? and what can this great box have to do with the person you were speaking about?"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!" laughed Walter, who had by this time unloosed the fastenings of the case. "This box, Harry, is for the present the residence of the *person* I have been speaking about. And the person herself," he added, raising the lid as he spoke with an air of the utmost pride and satisfaction, "the person herself is no less, as I flatter myself, than the most magnificent boa-constrictor ever brought alive to this country."

It would be difficult to describe the various

symptoms of terror and surprise which this announcement produced among most of the persons present.

The Doctor, who had been standing close beside his brother, retreated four or five paces with a more rapid and much less dignified step than usual, exclaiming:

"God bless my soul! Is the reptile safely secured, brother Walter? Surely it is not desirable to introduce animals of so formidable a species into—into—the privacy of domestic life! It is very dangerous doct . . . . that is, I mean to say, a very dangerous beast."

Lady Augusta and her sister had rushed to the furthest corner of the room, and were screaming together, "Shut the box! shut the box!" in tones that indicated approaching hysterics.

Young Harrington had advanced to his uncle's side, and was gazing with interest on the apparently slumbering monster; while Kate, with her hand on her brother's arm, and half shrinking behind him, was timidly venturing to gratify her curiosity also.

Mr. Harrington, after striving in vain to persuade the two elder ladies to come and look

at the animal, by assuring them that it was in a perfectly torpid state, closed the box, and informed them, to their no small relief, that he had brought it to England as a present to the Regent's Park Zoological Gardens, and that he intended to send it thither on the morrow; and then it was very satisfactorily arranged that it should be conveyed to Kate's cell for the night, and that a fire should be lighted there for its especial accommodation and comfort. The family party then separated for the night, but not before Lady Juliana had observed that she felt she owed it to herself to say that "it was in her judgment a vain and sinful tempting of the Lord, to feed and cherish animals which He had selected as the fitting form of incarnation for the eternal enemy of man, and a wicked disobedience and rebellion to preserve and cherish a creature whose head he had been positively commanded to crush."

CHAPTER X.

We must perforce follow the Doctor and Lady Augusta to their own apartment, for it was there that a conversation took place between them too important to our story to be omitted. It was the lady who began it, which she did by addressing her husband by a title which she now rarely used, except when she was not well pleased.

"Well, Mr. Warden!" said she, "what is your opinion of this newly-found brother, who is come back upon us like the prodigal son?"

"My dear love!" quoth the Doctor, "the parable, since you have referred to it, is assuredly intended to teach us what example to follow, and what to avoid. I trust we shall be ready to behave as did the prodigal's father, and

not as his brother. More especially, Lady Augusta, as in this case, the lost sheep has not spent all he had in riotous living—or otherwise, but very much the contrary."

"Come, come, Mr. Warden, let us leave texts and parables to their proper place, if you please, and endeavour to consider the important matter before us with common sense if we can," said Lady Augusta, which meant, in plain English, and divested of the ordinary decencies of expression, "Let us, in the consideration of this matter, be guided wholly and solely by motives of the most sordid kind; let us throw out of sight altogether all thoughts of duty, kindness, or brotherly affection, and look entirely at our own interests—our interests of the meanest and lowest sort." And yet how unfeignedly shocked would that pattern of propriety, the Doctor, or his superlatively correct lady have been if this species of conference had been openly and nakedly proposed by the one to the other.

But the worshippers of decency and propriety never do look at their own thoughts naked. Indeed, for the most part, their thoughts can scarcely be said to be born naked, but rather to

spring from the mind ready clothed with a becoming and presentable vesture of decorous semblance, and with the decent and becoming veil of proper phraseology.

The Doctor replied accordingly to his respected partner's harangue, and earnestly assured her that his wish was to consider the subject on the soundest and broadest principles of common sense; and he proceeded at once to give proof of docile obedience by observing that his brother must now be in possession of at least four thousand a-year, and probably of a very considerable sum of ready money besides; for it was well known that he had never spent above half his income since he succeeded to the estate; "and even of that annual expenditure he tells me," said the Doctor, with a tinge of pitying contempt in his manner, "that a few hundreds only have supplied all his personal wants, while full fifteen hundred a-year have gone in the purchase and transport of specimens for his museum."

"Specimens! specimens of what, in the name of Heaven?" cried Lady Augusta with a vivid appreciation of the value of fifteen hundred a-year.

"How should I know," returned the Doctor, with the dignified contempt which he invariably felt for everything of which he was ignorant. "Sticks, and stones, and trash of all sorts—birds, beasts, and reptiles, dead or alive! I have no doubt that horrid monster he has been so inconsiderate as to bring home with him, has cost him more than a hundred pounds."

"Gracious Heaven!" cried her Ladyship, "is it not dreadful to think that a man capable of such preposterous absurdity should have the uncontrolled disposition of four thousand a-year! I am sure many a statute of lunacy has been taken out on less cogent grounds."

"Walter *is* eccentric, lamentably eccentric!" replied the Doctor; and then, he added, with a touch of the pompous tone, and regular and piston-like rise and fall of voice which constituted his pulpit manner, "There never was a more striking instance of the fatal results arising from the neglect of a regular education, than is exhibited in the deplorable wreck of his mind—and intellect."

"The property is entailed, of course?" said Lady Augusta, interrogatively.

"No, my dear Lady Augusta, it is not.

The entail was cut off by my poor uncle and his son, who died very shortly afterwards. Walter has the entire and unrestricted possession of the property, and may sell the whole to-morrow, if he should think fit."

"Gracious Heaven!" again ejaculated her Ladyship, "I wonder that I should have never informed myself of all this before! But, in truth, I felt certain that our poor dear Henry was heir to the estate as a matter of course. And so, as a matter of course, he would be, entail or no entail, if Mr. Harrington were a different sort of man; or, in short, if he were in a condition to be considered as of sound mind, which, to say the truth, I cannot consider a man to be who is likely to defraud his natural heir for the sake of selling his estate, and sinking the entire produce in the purchase of snakes! I don't know what you may think of it, Mr. Warden, but I am very decidedly of opinion that the Lord Chancellor's opinion would be found to agree with mine."

The Doctor shook his head very mournfully, but it might be doubtful whether it was be-

cause he differed from his lady, or agreed with her.

"The very fact of his bringing that most awful and abominable serpent into my drawing-room," she continued, after pausing for a moment to shudder as the fearful outrage recurred to her; "this very fact alone, the mere statement of his having brought a boa constrictor into the drawing-room of Lady Augusta Harrington, would go far towards convincing a jury of his insanity."

The Doctor listened to her very attentively, and then replied:

"Absurd, as my poor brother's notions appear to us, my dear, and monstrous as they must appear to every man of enlarged mind, and regularly finished education, I do not think that his perversity of intellect amounts to what the law calls lunacy. Moreover, it is a deplorable fact, my dear Lady Augusta, that there exist large bodies of men deeply infected with various forms of very analagous mania."

This opinion was delivered in the Doctor's most dogmatizing and impressive manner; but after a short pause, he added in a less magnificent tone of voice:

"However, despite his follies, my dear, I must own that Walter has shown himself a good and kind brother on more than one occasion; and I cannot but think that he will eventually make such a disposition of his property as we shall all think right and becoming. But this, my dear Augusta, you must be sensible, is but one part of the question."

"Of course," replied her intelligent Ladyship; "and though, for dear Henry's sake, it may eventually be considered as the most important, it is not the most pressing subject for immediate consideration."

"You allude, my love, to the probability that my brother may wish to reside with us?" said the Doctor.

"I allude, Mr. Warden, to the four thousand a-year which this half-crazed brother has to dispose of, whether he live with us or elsewhere, and which he has evidently no more need of, and no more idea what to do with, than that great monster of a dog he has brought with him."

"It would be a great thing for him to reside under our roof, Lady Augusta," said the Doctor in a meditative and rather melancholy tone.

"He must, my dear, be in sad want of guidance and assistance of all sorts—even to the enjoyment of the natural and most ordinary comforts of life, of which he seems almost to be wholly ignorant."

The words of very decent, well-behaved people, like the Doctor, often require translating into plain English, in order to be fully intelligible even to their own hearts.

Thus the real thought which the Doctor's last words ought to have expressed was: "It would be a great thing for *us* if my brother Walter could be persuaded to live with us, and pay us a handsome sum from his abundant income for board and lodging." Nay, if the exact idea is to be completely rendered, the recollection that the Brother Walter took no wine must not be omitted.

Lady Augusta, however, who was a finished mistress of decorum in all its branches, including of course the use and ready comprehension of its phraseology, was at no loss to understand the Doctor's full meaning; she understood it perfectly well.

The key to this language is simply putting words indicative of the generous, the noble, and

the great, in order to express thoughts shabby, dirty, and little. It is a figure of speech which furnishes immense resources; and it may almost be said, that in the present state of society, *decency* could scarcely exist without it.

And Lady Augusta replied accordingly:

"It would indeed, my dear Doctor, be everything for the poor lonely man! And the thought does honour to your goodness of heart, Henry! But there are many objections —many things to be considered. It must be admitted, I know, that a brother has great claims; and God forbid that I should put any difficulty in the way, from any consideration for my own comfort."

"My dearest Lady Augusta," replied her husband, with a tone and look of deep admiration, "you are ever ready at the call of duty. House-rent is enormously high in this neighbourhood. I dare say now that it would appear almost incredible to poor Walter, that we should pay eight hundred a-year for this house."

"The expenses of housekeeping too, at the West-end of London," rejoined Lady Augusta, "would doubtless appear to his almost savage

nature absolutely preposterous. I dare say, poor man, that he did not mean to ask for anything out of the usual way when he told me to give him a turkey for his supper to-night; and turkeys costing, as our last did, twenty-five shillings!"

"If my brother's tastes and habits should be found to require that our moderate housekeeping should be modelled on a more expensive plan than heretofore, which certainly from the circumstance you mention does not seem altogether improbable," said the Doctor, "if such should really be the case, my dear, it would not be right, I think, to make our home distasteful to him by denying him comforts which he has such ample means of commanding."

"Perhaps not," replied Lady Augusta, with an air of lenient indulgence towards the sybarite tastes attributed to Walter on the strength of the turkey supper hypothesis. "Perhaps it *would* be too much to expect that an old, self-indulged bachelor, possessed of such a fine income, should content himself with such frugal housekeeping as ours; for, Heaven knows, I am often obliged to be careful. But it will be absolutely necessary, Doctor, *remember*, should

any arrangement of the kind be proposed, that this difference as to expenditure should be borne in mind."

"Unquestionably!" was the only word uttered in reply; but it was spoken in the Doctor's most decisive manner, and Lady Augusta was so perfectly well satisfied by it, that early peas, house lamb, and *pâté gras*, were mentally set down to Walter's account as necessaries that he would consider indispensable, and must pay for accordingly. And then her active mind passed on rapidly to another item in the account, and to this she alluded in her own peculiarly decorous manner:

"A brother, my dear Doctor," said she, in a tone both gentle and affectionate, "a brother has great claims, immense claims; and God forbid, as I said before, that I should stand in the way of your doing a brother's duty. No, not for the world would I be guilty of this: but the bringing any inmate into such a family as ours is a very serious thing, Dr. Harrington, and ought to be very maturely considered in every point of view. Now, there is one consideration, and I should not be doing my duty if I did not confess it, which may tend to

render your brother an objectionable member of our family circle. I allude to our daughter, Dr. Harrington. Kate is young, and extremely impressionable; and I leave you to judge whether the manners of savage life; such—in short, as we know must necessarily be those of Mr. Harrington—are exactly the model on which you would desire to see your daughter's fashioned?"

The Doctor, in his secret heart, knew perfectly well that this high-sounding objection was not intended to be insuperable, but was only brought forward as an item in the bill to be charged and paid for; so he very gently replied:

"It is, as you most justly observe, my dear, a matter of great importance, and one that demands mature deliberation; yet I cannot but flatter myself, Lady Augusta, that this danger may be met, and conquered, by a little increased vigilance on your part; and from this labour, fatiguing as it may be, I know you will not shrink. Nevertheless, I own that I certainly do think that the necessity of imposing all this additional trouble upon you, ought to be taken into consideration when we are fixing the amount which my wealthy brother ought to contribute

to the expenses of our family establishment. This would be but common sense and common justice."

"I knew you would agree with me, dear Doctor," replied her Ladyship, well pleased with the deceit drapery with which he had so readily covered up her not very gracious suggestion; and after the pause of a few seconds, she added, in an accent of the most perfect conjugal confidence: "Well then, taking all things into consideration what sum do you think it would be right to name? We had better make up our minds on this point at once, my dear Henry; for if your brother has any idea of the kind, it is highly probable that he will mention the subject to-morrow, and it is quite as well we should have mutually made up our minds upon the subject, beforehand. Indeed, even if he should not touch upon the matter at all, you will probably think that it would be no more than brotherly affection demands if you were, unsolicited, to propose this truly kind arrangement to him. In any case, however, it is highly desirable that you should be prepared. Our greatest difficulty will be about a sitting-room for him. I suppose it will be necessary to give him one of some

sort or other? I am afraid it would be very inconvenient to give up your study. Do you think you could manage without it?"

"My dear Lady Augusta, it is wholly impossible—altogether out of the question—not to be thought of for a moment! I would far rather give up London, and divide the year between Oxford and Glastonbury."

This hint was sufficient, as the sympathising feelings of the Doctor led him to anticipate would be the case, and Lady Augusta made no farther allusion to the sacred accommodation he so dearly valued.

"There would be no difficulty," she resumed, "in getting Kate to relinquish her rooms, but I am afraid, from a few words which I overheard to-night, from her uncle, that he would object to any such proposal."

"My dear Lady Augusta," said the Doctor eagerly, "now you mention Kate's room, I remember Walter expatiated upon the great pleasure and advantage arising from her windows commanding such a fine view of the Park. Now it is obvious, I presume, for I have never been in that part of the house myself, that the view must be finer still from the room above. Surely,

my dear, the two rooms over Kate's bed-room and sitting-room would accommodate Walter very satisfactorily? With his extraordinary activity too, it must be quite delightful to him to ascend so many stairs. It is a law of nature, a well-known law of nature, Lady Augusta, that all creatures delight in exercising the faculties which they possess in the greatest perfection."

"In that case," replied Lady Augusta, looking extremely well-pleased, "in that case, Doctor Harrington, all the servants must *at once* be instructed that those apartments are no longer to be called the back attics. The housekeeper has hitherto slept in one of them, and the other has been used as a lumber-room. Briggs must now share my maid's-room, and the lumber-room must immediately be cleared out. The two rooms will then indeed form a most desirable apartment. Indeed, considering the purity of the air, the beauty of the view, and the very much greater quiet and tranquillity which they must possess, they may very fairly, I think, be considered as the best and pleasantest quarters in the house."

"And even if they are so, my dear love," rejoined the Doctor with an air of almost

angelic benignity, "even if they are so, I should still be well pleased that they should be given up to my brother. His means are amply sufficient to justify his being allowed to occupy the best part of whatever house he may reside in. And it will be a great pleasure to me, in any conversation I may have with Walter on the subject, to point out to him the desirable features in the rooms which we are so fortunately able to offer him."

"I am sure it will! I am quite sure of it!" replied her Ladyship approvingly. "But now, my dear, let us return to the important question —always bearing in mind the heavy expenses which it is clear, even from the cursory examination of the subject that we have now given it, that we must incur in making your brother as comfortable as we would wish him to be, and not altogether losing sight of what is due to ourselves, and our children—what sum per annum, Dr. Harrington, do you think it would be right to propose to him?"

Up to this point the conversation had proceeded briskly enough, but this was the heart of the matter, and it was a knotty heart, and the Doctor paused long ere he replied to it, so long

indeed, that his impatient consort hastened his deliberations by exclaiming:

"Well, Mr. Warden! have you gone to sleep? or do you mean to keep me all night, waiting for your reply?"

Thus strangely urged, the worthy dignitary, who far from forgetting this part of the subject, had in truth been concentrating the whole power of his mind upon it, at length made up his mind to speak as follows:

"I am of opinion, Lady Augusta, that it would be very greatly for my brother's advantage to purchase all that a residence under my roof—and yours, Lady Augusta—would give him, for the annual payment of one thousand pounds. I am sure we could not do it for less in justice to ourselves."

Lady Augusta was disappointed. She had in her own mind determined upon trying for half as much again. So she returned to the charge, by very emphatically exclaiming:

"No, Mr. Warden! no! that will not do. It is all very well, and very natural for you to feel generously disposed towards your brother, but you ought not to exercise your generosity at the expense of justice to your own family. You

must know, perfectly well, that a thousand a-year will *not* pay for choice rooms in a house of eight hundred a-year; a table of the most costly, and probably troublesome kind, great fatigue, great care, great anxiety and responsibility, and the use of a carriage. Besides, Sir, use your common sense for a moment, and tell me, if you please, what is your bachelor brother to do with the remaining three thousand a-year? Squander it, Mr. Warden! squander it in an unprincipled manner, in purchasing absolutely useless trash. Is this right, Sir? Ought we to permit such shocking, such sinful waste of money, if we can in any way prevent it? No, Mr. Warden! most assuredly we ought not. I think," she continued, in a gentler tone, after taking a few minutes to recover herself from the shock which the Doctor's shabby little estimate had caused her, "I think, that with my careful management, I might be able to make fifteen hundred a-year suffice—but certainly not a shilling less, certainly not. In justice to myself and my three children I could not attempt it."

"I have not the least doubt that you are perfectly right, my dear Lady Augusta," re-

plied the Doctor, very docilely; "not the least shadow of doubt. You understand such matters much better than I do. I am only afraid that Walter, who is of course more ignorant of all these things than even I am, I am only afraid that he might think fifteen hundred a-year rather high for board and lodging; and that it might not occur to him to make any allowance for—" here the Doctor hesitated a little, "for—those other considerations, which it is absolutely necessary to take into the account."

"Upon my word, I will not suppose anything so absurd, Dr. Harrington," said the bolder-spirited lady. "If your brother," she continued, "is really so completely ignorant of the modes and customs of civilized society as to be unconscious of the fact, he must by some means or other be made to comprehend that mere food and lodging do *not* include all the requirements and expenses of a gentleman in London. But I cannot think," she added, after meditating in silence for a minute or two, "I cannot think that a man who is capable of paying above a hundred pounds for a hideous, venomous snake, is likely to care much whether

he pays a little more or a little less for anything."

And herein Lady Augusta made a nearer approach to speaking the thoughts of her heart than she had yet done. Her hopes of obtaining a handsome addition to her husband's already handsome income, were chiefly based on the conviction that her brother in-law was too "savage" to know or to care much about the value or the use of money.

"Well, my dear love, resumed the Doctor," "I defer entirely, as I said, to your better judgment; and whenever the subject comes to be spoken of, I shall tell Walter that for fifteen hundred a-year he may have in this house all the comforts and blessings of a family, and a home. But that for a smaller sum, it would be impossible for me, without injuring my own children, to receive him."

"The latter alternative to be, of course, touched on *only* in case he object to the sum named," said Lady Augusta.

"Of course, my dear, of course," was the reply.

And then this admirable couple turned each on their respective pillow, and sunk into that sweet sleep which those blessed by the approval

of their own consciences—and a good digestion —are sure to enjoy after the fatigues of a well-spent day.

* * * * *

And now before closing this chapter, we will relieve the anxious reader's mind by communicating at once the result of the important proposition which had been decided on in the preceding conversation.

Walter, as his thoughtful relatives had anticipated, did not let the morrow pass without adverting to his future plans.

It was in the Doctor's study, and immediately after breakfast, that the conversation between the brothers took place. The proposal that the elder should find a home in the house of the younger came from Walter, who went on to talk of his brother's children, and of their being all that he had to care for in the world; and he said how much he had been charmed with all he had seen of his niece Kate, and how needful it was to happiness to have something to love, especially when one felt old age coming on. All which were sentiments highly praiseworthy, and pleasant to hear from a wealthy bachelor-brother. But still there

was no opening afforded by which the Doctor could enter upon the £. s. d. part of the subject.

He began to get embarrassed and fidgetty; and at last, as Walter did not appear to be getting at all nearer to this important portion of the question, he desperately determined to dash at it boldly, by saying:

"Ah, brother! would to Heaven, it were in my power to offer you all the blessings you have been speaking of as freely as I would wish to do it."

"My dear Harry," cried the simple Walter, "is there any objection in the way? I am heartily sorry for it."

"There is no objection, my dear Walter, but such as arises, alas! from my restricted means, and the terribly large expenses incidental to my position."

"But this would surely be amended, dear Harry, and not aggravated by our uniting our means together," returned Walter. "My expenses are small, and my wants few and simple."

The Doctor was cruelly puzzled by this little speech. The first clause of it seemed to inti-

mate a possibility that Walter's notions of contributing to the family expenses far exceeded in liberality all he had ever dared to hope for. But then, the latter part of it seemed to indicate a valuation of what he was to receive, which would fall far short of what he and his admirable helpmate hoped to maintain.

After a short pause given to a hasty and nervous calculation on the probabilities, he decided that in any case it would be best to come to the point at once, and he replied:

"You are, as ever, all generosity and kindness, my dear Walter, and your truly brotherly proposition emboldens me to say frankly, that I think, by careful management, and by the help of Lady Augusta's admirable economy, all those blessings of which you have been speaking might, without injury to my own family, be secured to you for fifteen hundred a-year; including, you know," he added hastily, as if anxious to modify the effect of his proposal, "always including the use of a carriage."

"Well, my dear fellow, so be it," cried Walter, cordially. "And I shall truly rejoice," he added, "if the arrangement is any assistance

to you in defraying the heavy expenses you speak of."

"Heavy indeed, my dear brother," returned the Warden, with a sigh. "Ah, Walter!" he added, "you don't know all that the world expects from a man in my position."

And so it was definitively settled, to the satisfaction of all parties, that Walter should have board, lodging, family ties, and something to love in his declining years, including the use of a carriage, for fifteen hundred pounds per annum, paid quarterly.

CHAPTER XI.

THE important arrangement which has been recorded in the last chapter, caused Lady Augusta to postpone the great party, which has been already alluded to, for a week or two. She had originally intended that it should come off about the end of May, but the little revolution in family arrangements which the arrival of Mr. Harrington had occasioned, made it convenient to postpone the ball, and the 25th of June had ultimately been fixed on for it, which day was now near at hand.

For although not a day had passed since Walter's arrival, unmarked by some circumstance connected with his initiation into civilized society, well worthy to have engaged the atten-

tion of such small chroniclers as ourselves, we are compelled to pass them in silence, in order to leave time and space for what is to follow; and we must therefore hasten over the events which have befallen our *dramatis personæ* in the interval at a hard gallop.

Walter had already seen much which had appeared to him to be fully as astonishing as anything that his widely extended travels had shown him; and the curious interest and very great surprise and *puzzlement* which many of the aspects of civilized life afforded him, were increased in no slight degree by an inveterate habit, very difficult to be broken through when once contracted, of believing everything that was told him.

Lady Augusta had done her best to make her brother-in-law a little more presentable, as she called it, and her well-meant efforts had taken the form of sundry earnest lecturings upon certain points in his conduct and bearing which Walter thought infinitesimally small in their significance, and which soon caused him to assign to his sister-in-law a place in his mind next door to that still occupied by his recollections of Mrs. Ponsonby, whose unceasing

warfare against the dirty shoes and rumpled shirt-collars of his naughty-boyhood still lived in his memory.

He considered Lady Juliana as a very curious but rather incomprehensible animal. There was no great chance, certainly, that there would ever be any great sympathy between them, and in truth the pious spinster already hated the "Godless savage," as she called him, with a very zealous hatred. But it is true also that he had given her considerable cause to do so, and there really was great reason to fear that the poor lady's life would become a burthen to her in consequence of Mr. Harrington's residence in the family, for causes of very vehement offence were perpetually occurring.

Sometimes when Lady Juliana would heave a sigh, or breathe forth a groan, such as are considered in all civilized society to express reprobation of the wickedness of those around, or of compunction for the sins of the whole world in general, Walter Harrington would earnestly ask, "what ailed her?" and that too in a tone of such truly genuine solicitude, as made it difficult for any by-stander to hear it without a smile. And, moreover, the extreme

amusement which every such occurrence evidently afforded the unregenerate Kate, occasioned Lady Juliana the disagreeable sensation of extreme and intense provocation.

Moreover, the offending wanderer was always, and for ever, in such detestably high spirits, and with so provoking an appearance of happiness, that not even her secret conviction of his eternal perdition appeared sufficient to soothe the irritation of spirits which his joyous hilarity produced—for did not his rude health seem to defer to an almost indefinite distance this just requital for all he made her suffer?

Once, indeed, matters threatened to become still worse between them, for she almost succeeded in really offending the old gentleman.

It happened that Walter had, one Sunday afternoon, proposed to the ladies that they should accompany him to the Zoological Gardens, and Lady Augusta and Kate had readily accepted the invitation, to the great scandal and indignation of Lady Juliana, whose feelings were so vehemently excited by it, that she turned to her sister, and said, with great animation:

"Mr. Harrington, *as an Atheist*, acts with

perfect consistency in breaking the Sabbath; but I do hope, Augusta, that you—"

A sudden and very unusual flush had spread over the face of Walter Harrington.

"*What* do you say?" exclaimed he, with an intonation that made all present start. "But it would be very silly," he added, in quite a different tone, "it would be very silly to be angry about it. Ladies should not use Greek words, which doubtless they do not understand."

"You must pardon me, Mr. Harrington," replied the irritated lady, with an intensity of bitterness which she took no great pains to conceal, "you must pardon me, if I do not plead guilty to the excess of ignorance which you are pleased to attribute to me. An Atheist, Mr. Harrington is one who, as the Scripture awfully describes it, lives without God in the world—unhappily, we see but too many such around us!"

"And may I ask you, Lady Juliana, upon what grounds you have come to the conclusion that I, and those you class with me, live, as it is phrased, without God in the world?" And now Walter Harrington spoke gently and calmly.

"I have but to answer in the words of holy writ, Sir! 'By their fruits ye shall know them,'" replied the lady, with awful emphasis, and a most lofty air of superiority. "And how can it be supposed, Sir," she added very solemnly, "that those who break God's commandments can have the fear of Him before their eyes?"

"Perhaps, Lady Juliana," replied the old man, with a mild and solemn thoughtfulness, that rendered his venerable physiognomy the *beau-idéal* of a pious patriarch, "perhaps many such may have that perfect love of God in their hearts, which we are told casteth out fear. But let me suggest to you, my good lady, that it is unreasonable, as well as uncharitable, to conclude that those do not recognise God who conceive of Him differently from yourself."

It must, of course, be scarcely necessary to mention that Lady Juliana considered it now more clearly proved than ever that Mr. Harrington *was* an Atheist, and that her conscience very much applauded her for hating him more than ever, accordingly.

The gentleman on his part, however, began very seriously to nourish an opinion that her Ladyship was a little, or perhaps not a little,

insane upon such subjects. And perhaps he was right; although her insanity did not reach the point at which it was likely to be recognised as such by the world in general.

How arbitrary are the distinctions, and how narrow the divisions of our phraseology! The world would have denied that the mind of Lady Juliana was in a state to deserve the appellation of *insane*, but a large portion of it would have admitted that it was *unsound*. Walter did not sufficiently recognise this difference between tweedledum and tweedledee; yet it lawfully divides the inmates of a mad-house from those who put them there.

Meanwhile a very strong and fast friendship had sprung up between Kate and her uncle. There had been a mutual tendency towards liking each other on the first evening of their acquaintance, and this had ripened into a warm and firm affection, with a rapidity which could have been consistent with enduring solidity only in the case of natures as wholly guileless, open, and unreserved as those both of the uncle and niece. It is curious to observe how quickly and spontaneously natures which deserve to be trusted, trust, when they encounter beings as

single-hearted as themselves. Kate, though she was a good and very affectionate daughter, and had never in her life dreamed of mistrusting her father in any way, yet felt conscious that somehow or other she could a thousand times more readily have confided the inmost secrets of her heart to her Uncle Walter than to her father, or to her mother either.

And what heart is there, however innocent, however guileless, but has its secret?

It was fortunate that this confidential feeling existed between the uncle and niece, because Walter was a person from whom it was very difficult to hide any secret in which his heart took an interest. The secret which reconciled the seeming contradictions of Lady Augusta's ourning desire to have the Duchess of Benlomond at her ball, with the constantly disparaging way in which she spoke of that noble star of fashion, might have rested securely impenetrable by Walter to the end of time; and yet there were other secrets which some persons might think quite as much beyond the sphere of an old bachelor which it would have been very difficult to conceal from him.

Not, indeed, that the noble-hearted old man

had the remotest thought of prying into the secrets of any one, for he would most scrupulously have looked to the left, had any one told him that if he looked to the right he might see what the parties concerned desired to conceal from him. But he was slow to suppose that anybody wanted to conceal anything; nevertheless, the habits of more than half a century, spent in observation of all that was presented to his reasoning faculties, had given an acuteness to his observing powers, which enabled him to understand much which might have passed unnoted, or remained unintelligible to less practised faculties.

And thus it had come to pass that Uncle Walter was very considerably more aware than his niece Kate herself, that she was rapidly learning to consider Mr. Caldwell as so very admirable a person, that pretty nearly all the world beside was absolutely nought in comparison. He knew that young ladies from about seventeen, to—not all his acute observations had enabled him to assign the other limit to the period—but he knew that ladies from seventeen upwards, were liable to this sort of vehemence in their feelings and opinions, and like a dutiful

disciple of Nature, he accepted the fact as incontrovertible. It next became a question with him, whether he should turn his acute perspicacity to account by communicating his discovery to the young lady herself, or whether he should do no such thing, but suffer matters to take their own course. After some consideration, he decided on the latter plan.

All he had seen of Mr. Caldwell, inclined him to think highly of him; but his interest in Kate, and her welfare, did not permit him to remain satisfied with so slight an acquaintance, and the active old man had taken measures to obtain farther and more particular information. The more he learned concerning him, the more inclined he became to hope that the attachment would prove to be mutual; and accordingly, he decided in his own mind that if Mr. Caldwell and Kate chanced, or chose to fall in love with each other, there was no just cause or impediment why they should not be joined together.

Between young Harrington and his uncle there was also a sort of friendship, and a certain degree of mutual liking. There was a fresh sincerity, and very genuine dislike to falsity, cant, and humbug in them both; and this very

soon operated as an attraction and tie between them. But the same quality had produced different effects on the two natures, or rather, perhaps the effects varied because they had been called into action under widely different circumstances.

The younger man had passed the last half-dozen years of his life in the fashionable world of London and Paris, and the averseness to *seeming* which has been mentioned as a prominent feature in his character, had generated in him a bitterly sarcastic spirit which was far from producing a healthy or fruitful condition of mind.

The truthful simplicity of the old naturalist, on the contrary, was that of a man who has hardly ever made acquaintance with falsehood, who knows nothing of it, nay, disbelieves in its existence except as a rare monstrosity.

There was ever in young Henry Harrington's mind, and in his manners too, a something of harshness, and a tone of sneering which grated painfully against the warmer sympathies, and more genial temperament of his uncle; while, on the other hand, the simplicity and worldly

ignorance of the senior frequently produced something very like contempt from the worldly wisdom of the far more narrow-minded junior.

Both, however, were very strongly persuaded that the other would have been a very noble fellow, had he but enjoyed the good fortune of living the life, and passing through the training which he himself had done. Such an opinion as this, is far on the road towards mutual esteem.

With all the three Wigginsville sisters, Walter had become, more or less, an intimate and valued acquaintance. Miss Mary Jane did not, indeed, venture to display too much cordiality towards him in the Vale Street drawing-room, and in the presence of her valued friend the Lady Juliana, for she was perfectly aware that her regenerated Ladyship had pronounced him to be a brand given over to the burning, and considered him as neither more nor less than pitch, which could not be meddled with without defilement. At the Wigginsville tea-table, however, at which Walter had several times been a guest, the gentleness of the fair devotee's nature was permitted to mitigate the

severity of her theology, and she suffered herself to hope that the call, which she confessed with a sigh had been lamentably long delayed, would come at last.

Miss Hannah's really sound sense and goodness of heart constituted a natural bond of alliance between her and Mr. Harrington, which, to say the truth, was not a little strengthened by the trifling eccentricities, and small rebellions against society in the matters of bibs and tuckers, coat-lappets and hats, of which both were wont to be guilty.

As to Miss Jemima, she very naturally considered this new acquaintance to be clearly marked out by his attainments, pursuits, and high reputation in the scientific world as one of her especial subjects and admirers; while, on the other hand, the venerable philosopher was fully aware that he owed to her particular *penchants* and habitual associations, the pleasure of frequently meeting in the Wigginsville drawing-room many persons distinguished in various scientific pursuits, with whose names and reputation he was perfectly familiar.

If to all this we add that Mr. Garbel had

been briskly pushing on the siege he was laying before Miss Mary Jane's gentle heart, the reader will be able to enter with us on the next scenes of our drama with a clear comprehension of the position of the *dramatis personæ*.

CHAPTER XII.

As volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and other such great convulsions of nature, are generally heralded by portentous heavings, thunderings, and rushing of mighty winds, so did the Doctor's house in Vale Street show for many days manifest signs and warnings of the coming eruption of festivity, so long projected by Lady Augusta.

This fated 25th of June fell on a Wednesday, and it was now the preceding Monday. Already the first floor of the house presented the appearance of the main-deck of a ship of war prepared for action.

The unhappy Doctor—happy enough, indeed, in the prospect of the splendour which was

to be the result, but most unhappy amid the agonies and convulsions of preparation — the miserable Doctor kept himself hid and sheltered, as far as was possible, in the sacred retreat of his study. But even *that* was to be invaded on the morrow, for it was there that the family must live, and — deplorable profanation!—it was there that on the great day itself such miserable morsels as they might obtain by way of dinner, must be eaten! the handsome dining-room having to be surrendered into the hands of Gunter and his myrmidons. Moreover, this sacred scene of sacred study was to become the receptacle of cloaks and shawls throughout the livelong night!

Walter, whose rooms might on this occasion with some show of truth be indeed called the most desirable part of the house, inasmuch as in their lofty tranquillity they were far above the tumult and the din, Walter wandered about the transformed mansion greatly astonished and inexpressibly perplexed; observing everything, but comprehending nothing.

On one occasion he ventured to ask Lady Juliana, who was superintending the tying up of flowers into garlands, why the comfortable

chairs had all been removed from the drawing-rooms, and those very disagreeable and ugly-looking benches ranged round the room?

"I am seeing these garlands constructed at my sister's urgent request, Mr. Harrington," she replied. "But these are pomps and vanities which I do not willingly meddle with. You had better ask Lady Augusta."

"*Vanities!* These miserable little mimicries of seats are indeed a vain delusion for all who would rest upon them; but I should not think, Lady Juliana, that the severest anchorite that ever lived could call them *pomps*. They appear to me worthy of a penitential cell."

"How hardly shall the things appertaining to the spirit be understood by such as are under the dominion of the flesh!" returned Lady Juliana with a groan. "But I assure you, Sir," she added, "that I am not sufficiently of the world to explain its ways to you."

Lady Juliana was one of the tolerably large class who profess to think, and probably do think, that *fêtes*, and finery, as well as most other pretty and agreeable things, can only be enjoyed at the risk of eternal burning here-

after, a bargain which with great prudence and good sense they decline making.

And in this respect, at least, the position of Lady Juliana in her sister's family was a fortunate one, for the *ci-devant* beauty might there enjoy the pomps and vanities which she had been early taught to love, at the expense of her sister's soul, and that of the Doctor, on the very easy condition of entering, in her own person, an occasional protest against their worldly-minded enjoyments.

It is curious to see how easily professing believers in the doctrine of eternal punishment for the sins committed during our present state of existence, make up their minds to believe that all those nearest and dearest to them (if they choose to differ in religious doctrine, or religious practice) will not only perish everlastingly, but will be subjected during countless ages to the most torturing agonies that their organization can be made to endure.

Both Romanists, and Calvinists gravely proclaim that such is their belief; but if it be so, it is really difficult to comprehend how they can look forward to such a destiny for those

they love with the philosophical composure that we witness.

The Romanist indeed has the consolation of believing that if he can but contrive to raise money enough to pay for masses for those who have died in their sins and their unbelief, they may still have a chance, or rather a certainty, of escaping; but the adherents to the Lady Juliana's much more terrific creed permit themselves no such soothing alternative, and it is therefore really astonishing to see with what unflinching courage they contemplate the awful result, of which they declare themselves sure, beyond the possibility of mistake.

Walter, whose curiosity respecting the comfortless benches, was perfectly genuine, and still perfectly unsatisfied, ventured to attack Lady Augusta herself on the subject in the very midst of her cares and manifold anxieties.

"Lord, Mr. Harrington!" was her impatient reply, "it is to make room to be sure. I hope," she added with conscious pride, "that there will not be standing-room, even on the stairs. I have more than three hundred on my list."

"But surely, in that case, my dear sister, your friends will find themselves very uncom-

fortable, especially in this hot weather. Would it not have been more hospitable to have named a whole week instead of one day, and have let them come in comfortably, forty or fifty at a time?"

"Fiddlesticks! Friends and hospitality indeed! Do you really suppose now, Mr. Harrington, that I care one quarter of a straw for all these people? Not I, Sir, believe me. But you do not understand these matters, my good Walter. Friends and hospitality are all very well in the country, but they have very little to do with a London cram."

It was not a very easy matter, however, to enable Walter Harrington to bring his barbarous mind to take in the fact that the coming solemnity owed its origin in no respect and in no degree to any feelings of kindness, hospitality or friendship whatever, but wholly and solely for vanity and ostentation, stimulated, however, by the hope that every penny expended would be repaid by a *quid pro quo* of some sort or other.

This, indeed, might be said with equal justice of all the parties given by Lady Augusta, and all the other ladies of her class; but this iden-

tical party had a special and more than usually important end in view, and one that it is necessary we should explain to the reader. The said reader already knows that Lady Augusta Harrington had a daughter; and as this fair daughter had attained the witching period of eighteen years of age, it was become of course the first object of her mother's life to obtain a good marriage for her. That her beautiful Katherine should marry *well*, was at this period decidedly the most anxious wish of her mother's heart. There is no need to explain what Lady Augusta meant when she talked of Kate's marrying well, for the phrase is too generally understood to bear the sense which her Ladyship assigned to it, for any explanation to be necessary.

How this great object of securing a *good* marriage for Kate was to be forwarded by her mother's cramming all her acquaintance into a space too small to hold them, would have furnished another puzzle for Walter, as difficult to solve as the substitution of hard benches for soft chairs; but this needs no explanation to those who are initiated into the mysteries of the fashionable world. And Heaven forbid that

we should do any of our readers the cruel wrong of supposing that they are not of the number.

But in thus brilliantly filling her rooms on this particular occasion, Lady Augusta had an especial object.

The London season of this year had witnessed the first introduction of the young and immensely wealthy Lord Goldstable to the perils and delights of our magnificent metropolis. This fortunate youth, who had just reached the conclusion of a long minority, was the only son of a long-descended Scotch Earl; a strange sort of man, half-philosopher, half-misanthrope, and, as some of his neighbours declared, very nearly whole madman; some proof of which was furnished by the fact that in dying he left his little motherless son to the sole management of an old bachelor acquaintance and neighbour, a recluse whom nobody knew, and nobody cared to know.

A tutor had been provided for him, who remained with him till within a few months of his coming of age, when the poor man died, leaving the young Earl and his old guardian to a rarely-broken *tête-à-tête*.

By the especial request of the late Earl, this very faithful old guardian had taken up his residence in the wide old Scotch castle, in which his friend had lived and died. This castle had a noble lake near it, so the young Earl had learned to manage a boat, sails and all; he could moreover swim like an otter, and row like a Thames waterman. Game of all kinds abounded in the woods, so Lord Goldstable had learned to be a capital good shot, and he could hunt too, and leap anything.

In addition to all this, he had learned to read, write, and was tolerably well acquainted with the initiatory parts of arithmetic; but he stopped short at the rule-of three.

Moreover, from the age of ten to sixteen, he had been constantly attended once a-week by a dancing-master, who drove himself over from a town at the distance of ten miles from the Castle, to perform this service.

That the tutor, who was an "Oxford scholar," had duly gone through the ordinary routine of instilling as much Greek and Latin into his pupil as he could contrive to make him imbibe, is not to be doubted, for the tutor was a very

honest, worthy man; but he died in consequence of a fever caught during a long and stormy passage across the lake, before his pupil had made any very great progress in classical erudition.

The only relation the young man had in the world who moved in the circle denominated "the great world" was old Lady de Paddington, who has been already mentioned as the intimate friend of Lady Augusta Harrington. For some time before Lord Goldstable had obtained the age of twenty-one, and for some time before Kate had obtained the age of eighteen, it had occurred to these very intimate friends that the great-nephew of the one would make an excellent match for the daughter of the other, and many had been the pleasant half-hours they had spent together in laying plans for bringing them together in such a manner as to ensure the young man's falling in love with Kate, before he could have an opportunity of falling in love with anybody else.

Kate Harrington, in truth, was so very pretty a creature that it really seemed almost as certain to Lady de Paddington as to the proud mother herself, that it would be only necessary to let the

young man see Kate once, looking as they had both seen her look in the brilliant atmosphere of a ball-room, in order to enchant his eyes, win his heart, and obtain the offer of his hand.

It was obviously certain, however, that dozens of other mothers, and most of them of higher position than Lady Augusta, would be equally anxious for the honour of becoming his mother-in-law, and therefore both the plotting ladies felt that priority in "the start" might be everything.

Lord Goldstable had been just turned out from the bag of his minority, a fact perfectly well known to all studious mothers possessing "The Peerage," and was expected to give the town a very fine run. By the invaluable assistance of the great-aunt, an assistance *bien entendu* to be paid for by sundry grateful and convenient little attentions, Lady Augusta had been enabled to dart upon him the very moment his nose had become visible, and by the skilful management of Lady de Paddington the "honour of his company" at Lady Augusta's ball had been secured, before he had entered as a guest into any house in the metropolis save her own. Whether such a manœuvre might be within the

limits of fair sport, or whether it might be stigmatized as poaching we must leave to the jury of mothers to decide.

Lord Goldstable was, as we have said, very rich, and he certainly was, moreover, very silly. His riches amounted to eighty thousand a-year, and the accumulations of a long minority. The amount of his silliness cannot be stated with equal accuracy, but it was very great, and we shall probably not be far wrong if we estimate it as being as much above the ordinary average, as his wealth was. But despite his silliness, it would be cruel not to feel some degree of interest for him. Reared in deep seclusion, ignorant of almost all things, and especially so of the world and its ways, shy, diffident, and awkward, the unfortunate lad was turned out to run for his life as best he might, through the hungry pack of scamps and blacklegs, both noble and ignoble, plotting mammas and fascinating daughters, rogues, libertines, and leeches of all sorts. And to these tribes, as to all others, their natural prey is appointed, and in sufficient quantity. But hares have their swiftness, bulls their horns, and horses their hoofs, as the Grecian poet remarks; and rarely indeed does it

happen that any animal is delivered over to his natural enemies in so wholly defenceless a condition as was that helpless young peer. With such an auxiliary as his great-aunt, and only near connexion, it must be evident to all that Lady Augusta Harrington started with very great advantages. It so chanced that she had it in her power to be often of very essential service to the high-born, but far from wealthy old lady, who almost appeared to have the right of disposal of the helpless young peer; the right of presentation, we may fairly say, to that rich and eligible piece of preferment amounting to eighty thousand a-year, with a capital mansion, and very light duty.

And thus it came to pass that the contracting parties, Lady de Paddington, to wit, and Lady Augusta Harrington, had determined and arranged that the first London ball-room which his young Lordship entered should be that of the last-mentioned lady.

This having been decided between them, the preparations for this important *fête* were commenced immediately, not, however, till Lady Augusta had performed that first and most

precious duty of a good wife, namely, the taking her husband into her confidence.

The Doctor had already heard Lady de Paddington speak repeatedly of her great-nephew, with all the tender interest which such a rich great-nephew was likely to inspire in such a poor great-aunt—for Lady de Paddington was really, for a person of high rank, very poor; but he had never himself felt any particular interest about the young man, till Lady Augusta opened all her maternal heart to him on the subject.

The Doctor listened to her with deep attention, and replied very solemnly, after she had completed the statement of her hopes and her wishes:

"A great thing indeed, my dear! Such a marriage would, in truth, be an immense thing. Dear child! she would do honour to such a splendid position, Lady Augusta. It really is all that my fondest ambition could wish for my darling Kate; and I must say, Lady Augusta, that your management of the whole affair does you the highest honour. Pray, my dear love, let nothing be spared to make this *fête* all that it ought to be with such an object before us.

Upon such an occasion, expense becomes a very secondary consideration."

"I confess that I do flatter myself that the thing has been conducted with some skill," returned Lady Augusta. "But what will not a mother's affection for her child accomplish?"

"Eighty thousand a-year, I think you said, Lady Augusta, and the savings of a very long minority! God bless my soul!" ejaculated the meditative Doctor. "Did you hear anything of parliamentary influence, my dear? But, of course, a man with such a fortune *must* have influence; and I know that when Dr. Halchard got his mitre, I was spoken of very favourably in high quarters. You remember my having preached once — Well, well! God's will be done!"

With this pious feeling beaming in every feature, the excellent divine settled himself down into his arm-chair, to indulge in a little comfortable castle-building, while his more active consort proceeded to seek an interview with her daughter, for the purpose of forwarding the hatching of the chickens which she left the Doctor counting.

CHAPTER XIII.

"My dear Kate," said Lady Augusta, seating herself in the arm-chair which occupied one side of the fire-place in Kate's own sacred room, and motioning her daughter at the same time to place herself on the sofa opposite, "my dear Kate, there are two or three important words which, busy as I am at this moment, I am very anxious to say to you. So listen to me, my dear, with your best attention."

"I will indeed, mamma," replied the unconscious Kate.

"You are well aware, my dear Kate," resumed the anxious mother, "how earnest and how unceasing have been the endeavours of your father and myself to give you every advantage which our position would admit of; but—"

"I am indeed, dear mamma," interrupted Kate; "and I am so truly sensible of all I owe you, that I would do anything and everything in my power to testify it; but, unfortunately, it is now very near the end of the quarter, mamma, and I am afraid—"

Kate had fallen into an error, as people who have the hasty and bad habit of interrupting are very apt to do. But the fact was, that Lady Augusta had so frequently prefaced little demands on her fair daughter's purse by a precisely similar exordium, that Kate had taken it for granted that the sequel was to be the same. But her lady-mother now interrupted her in her turn, and proceeded with some asperity of manner to express herself as follows:

"I really am at a loss to guess, child, what it is you mean about quarters. If you would have had the good-breeding to permit me to finish what I was saying, you would have found out that it had nothing whatever to do with quarter-day. Let me beg of you at present, if you please, to listen to me with sufficient attention to prevent your making any more such extraordinary and very ridiculous blunders."

The penitent Kate begged pardon very ear-

nestly for her stupidity, and declared herself ready to listen with the greatest attention.

"I consider you, Kate, at this particular moment, in the very act, as I may say, of beginning life."

Kate felt rather puzzled, but she had promised not to interrupt again, and therefore looked with an air of innocent ignorance into her mother's face, but said nothing.

"What I mean," said Lady Augusta, in reply to this look, "is, that as you were only presented this year, I consider your real life, properly so called, to be just began. The ball which we are now about to give is entirely for the purpose, Katherine, of letting you be seen to advantage. You are, I am sadly afraid, still younger in mind than in years, at least upon some subjects of the very first and greatest importance; yet still I think you cannot be so very childish as not to know, that the first duty of a mother, who has before her the anxious and important task of marrying a daughter, is to take every possible means of securing this object."

"Mamma!" exclaimed Kate, trying to laugh, and to look as if she hoped that her mother was laughing too.

"This is no subject for jesting, Kate," returned her mother solemnly, "and your father would be very deeply shocked if he could believe for a moment that you could speak, or even look jestingly on such a theme. But let me go on, and I trust that your good sense will enable you to feel that it is no jesting matter that I am now speaking of. This season, Kate—this London season, I mean—will be rendered peculiarly interesting to all persons in the higher classes of society, by the introduction among them for the first time of one of the most distinguished young noblemen in Europe. I am speaking, my dear, of the young Lord Goldstable. He has just attained his majority, Kate, and I believe our ball will be the first large assembly of the fashionable world at which he has ever appeared. Now, listen to me with attention, my dear, that you may properly appreciate the nature of the position in which we are placed, and be prepared to act accordingly. Lord Goldstable has eighty thousand a-year, Kate, beside a vast amount of ready money. He has been educated in strict privacy, and has hitherto seen nothing whatever of the world; so that simple tastes, and virtue, and everything of that

sort, so very desirable, you know, in a husband, my dear Kate, is in this particular instance perfectly assured, and, in fact, a matter of absolute certainty. He has, as yet (except his great-aunt, Lady de Paddington), no friends, nor even acquaintances in London, and naturally, of course you know, he is very shy; but this must give such a charming freshness of mind and manner, as every one of right feeling must be delighted with. Now I happen to know, Kate, that this admirable young nobleman has heard of you in a manner that has very strongly impressed him in your favour; and, in short, I have every reason to think it extremely likely that he will propose to you, Katherine; and if this most happy chance should befall you, my dear love, I surely need hardly tell you that your acceptance of him will make your excellent father and myself the very happiest parents in the world."

"Oh, mamma! mamma!" ejaculated Kate, with something very like a groan. But in the next moment she felt again inclined to laugh, so truly comic did this specimen of maternal partiality appear to her.

* * * *

But her Ladyship said no more than the

truth, when she stated that the young Lord Goldstable had been already strongly prejudiced in favour of Kate; but the means taken for impressing his simple Lordship thus favourably, had indeed been rather stronger, and more direct in their nature, than Lady Augusta deemed it expedient to avow to her daughter.

The poor unfledged recluse was, in fact, most painfully anxious about his *début* in fashionable life. He had notions rather vague, yet pretty strong too, concerning the conspicuous place which he was destined to fill in the world, but these notions were painfully blended with an indistinct sort of consciousness of his own unfitness for the career before him.

In him the fear of ridicule—as is generally the case in weak minds—was so extreme, as almost to amount to agony, and the clever Lady de Paddington had pitched on this point of character whereon to rest the fulcrum of her lever.

She had represented to him that she fortunately had it in her power to present him to the family of a young lady who was the present reigning beauty of the town, the admired of all admirers, for whose hand nearly all the leading

unmarried nobles of England were competitors. She informed him also that this lovely creature had hitherto refused all the splendid offers which had been made to her, from an unconquerable dislike to the bold, confident and greatly sophisticated manners of the fashionable town-bred men of the present day. She also recounted in the most easy and pleasant manner possible, that she had mentioned him as a near relation, for whom she felt the most affectionate interest, to the young lady's family; and that when the lovely daughter heard her say that the life of her amiable young nephew had been hitherto passed wholly in the country, she had exclaimed with great enthusiasm:

"Well, then, once in my life, I have a chance of seeing some one that I shall really like."

The young man listened to all this with a heightened colour, and with such a look of interest and curiosity that the skilful negociator was tempted to proceed.

"Sweet pretty creature!" she exclaimed. "I do assure you, my dear Goldstable, that I would have given a great deal at that moment if you could only have looked at her, for I really don't think that any man could have looked at

her with indifference as she said this. There was something so beautifully innocent, yet so sweetly animated in her countenance, that, if you are not in love already, my dear nephew, she must, I think, have captivated you."

"But why should you wish for that, aunt?" returned the blushing young nobleman, laughing. "I don't think it's very likely that I should have a chance, when all the handsomest fellows in London have been refused."

"Well, Edward," pursued the clever old lady, with an admirable air of simple sincerity, "I am not much surprised at your laughing at me, because as you have never seen this lovely, gentle, admirable girl, you can have no notion of what she is, or of the perfectly good reasons I have for wishing what I certainly do wish, my dear nephew—namely, that you shall have the happiness and the honour of carrying her off from all competitors. You have no idea, Edward, how everything, and everybody is canvassed in the fashionable world! Great people, you know, have no business to occupy them, and I suppose that is the reason why they occupy themselves so much about the affairs of other people; and the consequence of

this is, that no new person can make his or her appearance in this said fashionable world without being talked over in every drawing-room. Now there is yourself for instance, my dear Edward, you would hardly believe how much you have been talked of already."

"Of me, my dear aunt? How is it possible that any one can talk of me? I don't know anybody in London."

"That makes no difference whatever, or rather it causes you to be still more talked of than if you were known," replied the old lady. "That you are *personally* a stranger in the circles of fashion is quite certain, but that by no means impedes your being talked of. You have a Viscount's coronet on your head, my dear nephew, and moreover it is well known that your income is large, and that your minority was long; neither is it any secret, my dear, that your education has been a very singular one, and that you have been brought up in very strict retirement. The natural consequence of which is, of course, that there is a strong propensity among our gay nobles, both male and female, to suppose that you will be found excessively shy; and I rather suspect that

some of these gay young lordlings enjoy not a little the idea of being able to throw you into the background, notwithstanding your title and your noble estate."

"Then I am sure it is a great folly in me to come to London at all, aunt," he replied; "and to tell you the truth, I do not think it was very wise, or very kind of you, to urge my doing so in the way you have done. If you had not told me to come, I should have put off all that bore about taking my seat, for I don't know how long."

"And it was for that very reason, Edward, that I was so very anxious that you should come at once. Nevertheless, my dear nephew, I do not think I should have had courage to urge your doing so in the manner I have done, had I not clearly seen my way before me, and felt very sure that instead of having the mortification of seeing you puzzled, I might have the extremely great pleasure of seeing you quiz everybody."

"And pray, how is that to be managed, aunt?" returned the sensitive rustic, very eagerly. "Prove your words in this respect,

and I will thank you heartily, for it is just exactly the thing I should best like."

"And it is very natural that you should like it, Edward. All men like it, and more particularly, I believe, all young men. The way, my dear boy, is very easy. I have told you that all the fine fashionable men about town have absolutely lost, not only their hearts, but their heads, from their admiration of my beautiful young friend Kate Harrington. Had I seen any chance of her being persuaded to accept any one of the splendid offers that were made her, I most assuredly would have done nothing to prevent it, for I should have considered the doing so as nothing short of a sin; but when, on the contrary, I saw her weeping day after day, because her parents were displeased at her so perseveringly refusing all the proposals that were made to her, my heart ached for her, and I determined to make her tell me why it was that she continued to act in a manner which evidently rendered her unhappy, as well as her parents. Dear child! She really is an angel, Edward! I am sure I shall never forget her answer."

"But what was her answer?" demanded the young man. "May I not hear it?"

"Yes, my dear," replied the old lady, after the meditation of a moment. "I really do not see that there can be any harm in telling you what she said; her answer was this: 'My dear Lady de Paddington,' she said, 'I would do anything in the world to please my dear father and mother that I did not think *wicked*. But I do assure you, that it would be very wicked in me to marry any one of the young noblemen that have proposed to me, for in the very bottom of my heart I hate them all! What other girls seem to admire,' she continued, 'I positively detest. I cannot bear their conceited air of fashionable assurance. I would rather die an old maid ten thousand times!'"

"What did you say in reply?" said Lord Goldstable, opening his eyes very wide, and looking greatly interested.

"I only said very quietly," returned Lady de Paddington, "'Well, Kate dear, if you are resolved to die an old maid you must, so I do not see the use of teazing you any more about marrying.'

"'It can be of no use indeed, Lady de Pad-

dington, as long as I am asked to marry such men as have had their heads turned by being worshipped by all the ladies in London. I hate such men! and I think it very hard that they cannot be contented to marry some of the young beauties who all seem dying for them, instead of tormenting me. But I cannot help thinking sometimes,' she added, 'that I am very unlucky, for if any young man who was not spoiled by London conceit were to fall in love with me, I feel almost sure that I should fall in love with him.' This it was, Edward, that made me so urge your coming to London, and it is this which makes me so anxious that you should see this celebrated beauty. If you admire her as much as I think you will—and on this point I have little doubt—your London career will indeed open most brilliantly. Propose to her at once, my dear Edward, and instead of being stared at and quizzed by all the conceited puppies who have vainly sought her hand, you will burst upon the town at once as the winner in the hottest race that has been run for years!"

The shaft was well aimed, and so keenly pointed that the noble mark was pierced to the centre as soon as hit.

Poor Lord Goldstable poured out his silly soul in gratitude to the scheming old lady; and it was decided that he should be presented to Kate Harrington on the night of Lady Augusta's ball, which was to take place on the following night; and that if he then found that he admired her as much as he expected to do, his proposals should be made with as little delay as possible.

All this was of course duly and accurately reported to Lady Augusta; and far as was our simple-minded Kate from filling, or having dreamed of filling, the place in the public eye which Lady de Paddington had assigned to her, her mother judged, and correctly enough perhaps, that she possessed abundantly sufficient charm, both of person and manner, to sustain the part that had been allotted to her, before more critical and experienced eyes than those of Lord Goldstable.

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Lady Augusta's interview with her daughter was very skilfully brought to a conclusion, by her Ladyship's hastily starting up and declaring that one of Weippert's men was waiting for her,

that the exact place for the orchestra might be finally arranged; and Katharine, to do her justice, very soon forgot the nonsense her mamma had been talking, by the simple process of remembering that all mammas were said to fancy that gentlemen were ready to fall in love with their daughters.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE important evening of Wednesday, 25th June, at length arrived, and found the house and family in Vale Street duly prepared for the great occasion. The first floor was as brilliant as a profusion of wax-lights, and a profusion of flowers could make it; the supper, which was to be served at two, A.M., had been prepared in Gunter's very best style; the music was excellent; and any one unaccustomed to such things might really have supposed that they were going to enjoy themselves exceedingly, if they had taken a review of the preparations before the arrival of the actors who were destined to fill the scene.

Our readers, however, are, of course, not so

rustically ignorant, and so wholly unaccustomed to fashionable parties, as to suppose anything so preposterously ridiculous, and so utterly unlike the truth. *They* know, unless indeed they are absolutely and altogether nobodies, how much, and how little, of real enjoyment is to be hoped for, when space enough for one hundred is to be occupied by three.

The Doctor had petitioned hard for a whist-table in the boudoir beyond the second drawing-room, but this had been very properly and prudently refused by the judicious Lady Augusta. This charming little third drawing-room, this "sweet boudoir," was destined for a far different purpose; nor was there a pretty woman in the room, or a pretty man either, who would not have been ready to declare that placing a card-table in it would have been absolute profanation.

A profusion of the most beautiful hot-house flowers, in gorgeous perfection of bloom, were grouped whimsically, but very gracefully, about the entrance, so as at the first glance to suggest the idea that no ingress to it was intended; but these enticing obstacles were speedily discovered not to be invincible, and once passed, something like a fairy bower was found within.

Experienced mammas will readily understand me, when I say that such a spot is of as much important use to their operations, as a landing-net to an angler.

The door had been removed from its hinges, but its place was admirably well supplied by the graceful folds of a floating curtain of delicate muslin, the drooping festoons of which, mingling with the boughs of the plants beneath, rendered the retreat within almost as effectually hidden from passing eyes as if it really had not been open to all who deemed it proper to penetrate its verdant recesses.

The other rooms were, as we have said, very brilliantly lighted; but here one alabaster lamp alone hung from the ceiling, and shed a delicately tempered light, which bore about the same proportion to the glare of the drawing-rooms, as that of the pale moon does to the lustre of the garish sun.

In the centre of this pretty trap, was—not a morsel of toasted cheese, but a bewitching little table with a set of chess-men upon it, and with a small sofa behind it, and a large arm-chair in front; moreover, there lay beside the chess-board a small portfolio of drawings. Playing chess, and

looking at drawings, are by no means among the least important, or the least useful occupations, that can be found to vary the monotony of waltzing.

Having been very officially and effectually warned off from the boudoir, together with his whist-table, the Doctor had proposed to establish himself and it in Kate's cell; and to this arrangement she had very willingly consented, having, however, very carefully taken precautions before the great day arrived so to stow away her secret treasures of all sorts, as to permit the profane vulgar to approach the sacred precincts without danger.

In the midst of all these busy preparations for worldly, and therefore undeniably sinful, amusement, it must not be doubted that Lady Juliana suffered various great and grievous pangs; but she assured herself, as well as every one else who would listen to her, that it was her duty as a Christian to submit herself meekly to the yoke which she had been appointed to bear; moreover, she also felt it her duty, in return for her sister's hospitality in affording her a home which she could not very conveniently have afforded to herself, to comply with her

taste and wishes in respect to her attire, and she therefore appeared on this great occasion dressed in the most becoming manner, and in the extreme of the reigning mode; and having thus in all things meekly resigned herself to the doing her duty in that state of life to which it had pleased God to call her, she proposed to watch with a scrutinizing eye all the little insects that were about to play around her, unconscious of their doom, and mark them all sliding down into the deep gulf of eternal perdition, with that fervent species of holy satisfaction which must naturally arise from the delightful consciousness that she was not "of them." Her friend and faithful ally, Miss Mary Jane Wigginsville, was quite ready, and even eager to confess, that she certainly did not think balls "consistent," but professed the most amiable and flattering willingness to be guided in her conduct on the present occasion wholly by Lady Juliana's high principle and excellent judgment; and after a long and edifying conversation which they held together on the subject, she became persuaded that if it were not her own fault she might convert the abomination into a blessing, for she might place herself near her devout and noble friend, and

listen to the pious and eloquent outpourings of her spirit as she uttered those solemn predictions of the wrath to come, with which she never failed to be inspired whenever she saw people who appeared to be enjoying themselves.

Henry Harrington had undertaken to constitute himself his Uncle Walter's *cicerone* for the night. He was too much *blasé* to find much pleasure and amusement in a ball, or at least in such a ball as his lady-mother was likely to give under the reverent roof of his respected father; but he thought that very considerable entertainment might be found in listening to his fresh-minded old uncle's remarks, and in listening to all the questioning he anticipated from him concerning all he heard and saw; for Walter's curiosity concerning the whole process was evidently excited in no common degree.

Lady Augusta meanwhile, though a slight shade of care rested on her brow, was still herself, and like a consummate general on the eve of an important action, felt that she could depend upon her own resources, and was confident of success, though at the same time anxious

and vigilant to neglect nothing that might contribute to it.

The first carriage is heard! This is always a nervous moment, when it suggests the question, "Is everything ready?" But most fortunately Lady Augusta had given orders ten minutes before that the candles should be lighted: the rooms therefore were not in total darkness, although considerably less than half that operation had been as yet achieved.

"I will bet a thousand pounds that it is now, as always, that detestable Miss Puddingthwaite," exclaimed Lady Augusta, "who is here half an hour before anybody else! She does it on purpose, in the hope of catching us with the servants and ladders in the room, and the candles not half lighted!"

"Why should she wish that?" asked Walter, determined to lose no opportunity of informing himself of everything connected with the details of the curious ceremony which was about to take place, the whole of which appeared to him unintelligible, and mysterious in no common degree.

"Why?" returned Lady Augusta, in a tone of considerable acrimony, and with a shrug

which she intended should be very expressive, but which in no degree assisted the comprehension of Walter. "Why?" she repeated bitterly, "because she knows perfectly well that her doing so will plague us! Nobody, I believe, likes to be caught in the very act of preparation at all better than I do, and she is not at all likely to forget that the lighting two or three hundred candles before it is necessary, is what nobody in their senses would choose to do if they could help it. I know perfectly well now, and always, that she does it on purpose to plague me!"

"Then why ask so very spiteful and odious a person to your house?" said the investigating Walter.

"Miss Puddingthwaite goes everywhere," was the reply, and it was uttered in an accent which plainly expressed that the information it conveyed was not of a nature to leave any doubt as to its authority.

The puzzled Walter stared at her, and as he had deliberately given himself up upon this occasion to the study of the new scene and the new people about him, he would probably have proceeded farther with his inquiries had not his

sister-in-law stopped him by an expressive sign, and by whispering almost in his ear the words, "Hush! she is here!"

And Miss Puddingthwaite it certainly was. Lady Augusta's long experience and intimate knowledge of the spinster's ways had not deceived her. She stepped most cordially towards her, however, and holding out both her hands, cried in most affectionate accents:

"How *very* kind this is of you, my dear Miss Puddingthwaite! We were just saying that we hoped you would come early! It is so friendly!"

"I was sure you would say so," replied the smiling persecutor, casting round her a sharp scrutinizing glance. "I certainly do like to see the rooms everywhere before the crowd comes, and you know you must let me go on in my own way, and look at everything. What a magnificent show of flowers! But isn't it a pity when one thinks how soon they will begin to look faded? for, of course, we all know that not quite all the blossoms we see, grow on the stems which they now decorate so cleverly. However, you certainly beat Lady Mary Compton in your exotics, my dear! By the way, I happened to

be with her this very morning when the gardener's bill for her last *fête* came in; and it was no trifle I assure you!" she added, directing a sharp glance towards the Doctor, for the amiable creature thought it by no means improbable that Lady Augusta had been exceeding the limits prescribed to her, and that she might produce a somewhat uncomfortable feeling in the minds both of the husband and wife by this statement of costs. Lady Augusta, however, answered very quietly:

"Yes, indeed, these things are shamefully dear, like most other luxuries; it is impossible to do things liberally without paying for it. But you know, my dear Miss Puddingthwaite, that I am a very prudent person, and I limited Jackson to forty pounds."

"Many of the specimens here are cultivated with great difficulty in this country," said Walter; this subject being probably the only one concerning the preparations for the evening upon which he could have hazarded an opinion.

But his having made this remark caused Lady Augusta to say: "My brother-in-law, Miss Puddingthwaite. Mr. Harrington is a recent accession to our circle." Miss Puddingthwaite

immediately honoured the old gentleman with a sharp look of observation, and a low sweeping courtesy, after which she prepared herself to pursue her voyage of discovery round the rooms.

"Well done, Lady Augusta," she exclaimed, after contemplating for a moment the metamorphosed boudoir; "how beautifully you have arranged that little back drawing-room. I do declare it is perfectly charming! such a Paphian bower! is it not? But I can't help thinking, my dear friends—I know you will excuse me for making the remark—that it is not quite impossible that ill-natured people might hint something rather saucy and disagreeable, in the way of quizzing I mean, on the perfect—seclusion—I suppose we must call it of this delicious retreat. One might almost fancy that it had been arranged for the express purpose of favouring a tender *tête-à-tête*. He, he, he! You must forgive me for laughing at my own ridiculous idea. But all joking apart, you know the real fact is, that there are some people so abominably censorious and ill-natured, that I should not be in the least degree surprised if disagreeable observations *were* to be made about it. If I were you, Lady Augusta, I really think

I should be inclined to remove those pretty delicate curtains, or at least I would loop them up a little higher." And Miss Puddingthwaite gently extended her long arm, and raised the drooping drapery as she spoke.

"Indeed! do you really think so?" returned Lady Augusta, with an aspect so indifferent and so immovable, that Miss Puddingthwaite must have been tempted to wish herself at home again, enjoying the luxury of her own sofa for another hour or so; nor were the words of her philosophical hostess at all more satisfactory than her looks, for she only added, in the very gentlest tone imaginable: "Do you really think so? Gliddon's people put them up as you see them, and they have a very general reputation for understanding this sort of thing. They are thought, I believe, to know what is graceful and pretty better than anybody, so I think we had better let them alone. And as to the dangers and difficulties of the retreat, everybody must judge for themselves."

While this conversation had been going on in the second drawing-room, Walter, who had withdrawn himself from the group in which it had taken place, was receiving his first lesson

from his nephew, Henry, in the first and finest apartment of the suite.

"Now then, Henry," said he, "you must begin your duties by explaining to me, first, why this Miss Puddingthwaite, being so very disagreeable a person as she seems to be, should be invited at all anywhere, and still more why she should, as your mother says, be invited everywhere? And, secondly, why her being invited everywhere else, is any reason for your mother inviting her here, notwithstanding the strong feeling of dislike with which it is evident she has inspired her? Both these points seem to me to be full of mystery. But I presume that, notwithstanding all that is so highly objectionable in her character and disposition, she must nevertheless possess some marked talent, or some noble trait of heart, or intellect, sufficiently valuable to over-balance all that has been stated against her?"

"One answer, oh, most methodical investigator, may reply to both your questions," returned Henry. "All Miss Puddingthwaite's acquaintance dislike her as much as my mother does; and all invite her for the same reason, namely, because all the rest do. To the best

of my knowledge and belief, she has no good quality either of heart or head to recommend her; *but* she goes everywhere, and there is no one of whom this is said, who could by possibility find the very slightest difficulty in going anywhere. You must be pleased to understand, oh, most unsophisticated uncle, that all the denizens of this our mighty Babylon are ever and always engaged in a vehement twofold struggle, consisting on the one hand of a constant effort to get pulled up into the social level just above them by a sort of moral clinging to the skirts of their superiors in the great hierarchy, and on the other by an equally increasing endeavour to shake off, and kick down, those who from below are striving to cling to them. All this is very hard work, and requires an immensity of patient persevering exertion; but it is really wonderful to see the unwearying courage with which this ceaseless labour is pursued! If the same principle of our nature could by any accident be set to work upon learning to fly, depend upon it you would speedily see the whole atmosphere crowded by ladies and gentlemen meandering between earth and the blue expanse of heaven.

Such ardour and perseverance must succeed in the long run, let it aim at what object it will. But to return to our Miss Puddingthwaite. It so happens that she has, and is perfectly well known to have, a particularly tight hold of the skirts of the Duchess of Benlomond, and my good mother, therefore, clings with an equally tenacious grasp to her skirts. In such a struggle as this, it is evident that if we *seem* to fail, we fail; and if Miss Puddingthwaite were not here to-night, it would be deemed a certain symptom that the star of the house of Harrington was sinking, which would be seen, noted, and perhaps triumphantly hailed by some of our most particular friends."

"Our name stands in the list of the knights who fought and conquered at Cressy," said Walter, laughing, "but I do not remember that of Puddingthwaite either there or in any similar chronicle."

"There be many among us, good uncle," replied the nephew, "who in our millocratic philosophy have deemed it 'wisest, discreetest, best,' to discard altogether the old-fashioned pride of ancestry. Ancestry, Uncle Walter,

will not enable a man to give a good ball, or even a good dinner. It is possible, certainly, that a man who traces his pedigree to the Conquest, *may* be admitted into the charmed circle of fashion, but most assuredly he will seek to enter it in vain, if he have no claims which entitle him to a more substantial and younger-born sort of sympathy."

"Really?" said Walter, with the air of one who meditates upon a proposition that is new to him; and after a minute so spent, he added: "Well, perhaps it is more reasonable that it should be so; but it is an innovation, Harry."

It was evident that Walter's education was going on very prosperously, but it was interrupted ever and anon by the arrival of more guests. We shall not trouble the reader with the bead-roll of them. There were of course the usual proportion of wits and fools, of beauties and frights, of quizzers and quizzed—in short, the usual proportion of the usual types; for the social world may always be ranged under a few strongly marked classes, each cast in its own mould, for very rarely indeed do we meet with an individual who has

a mould to himself; and when we do, we shall find that the world looks on him as a monstrosity, and generally treats him as the herd, full of the pasture, does the solitary stricken deer.

* * * *

Lord Goldstable was among the early arrivals. Of course, he appeared with his great-aunt, Lady de Paddington, and was duly presented by her to every individual of the Harrington family. His arrival caused no little sensation among such of the company as were already assembled, for no sooner had his name been pronounced, than he was at once recognised as the newly-emancipated minor whose great possessions had for some time past been canvassed and estimated by all the mammas, a good many of the daughters, and not a few of the gay young sons, who constituted the "fashionable world," of the present season.

The poor golden calf himself, whom all these various devotees were zealously preparing to worship, was very far indeed from being in a state of enjoyment. He was a tall gawky lad, with large heavy features, which though not particularly ill-formed were utterly devoid of all

intellectual expression, or any such degree of animation as might redeem their heaviness. His complexion was ruddy and betokened abounding health, his eyes bashful and dull-looking, and his straight hair of a light straw colour.

The poor boy's face became positively purple as he advanced up the room to the group of which Lady Augusta was the centre, and every feature, every limb, and every movement gave token of shyness and embarrassment. Poor fellow! he would at that moment have thankfully given a large slice out of his wide-spread acres could his so doing have enabled him to look, and to feel, like any one of the gay and graceful young men whom he saw around him. The only redeeming peculiarity of his appearance, which was a look of unmistakable good-humour, could not avail him now, for he looked and felt infinitely more disposed to cry than to laugh.

Kate's reception of him was admirable, and such as nothing but a large share of good sense could have enabled her to achieve under the existing circumstances; for most assuredly if it had been Lady Augusta's object to make her

daughter look and feel annoyed and awkward, upon seeing him, instead of graceful and gracious, she could have done nothing more likely to produce such a result than what she had done.

But our quiet Kate appeared not to be in any degree affected by it. The very keenest eye—and there were several very keen eyes fixed upon her—could not detect the slightest shade of greater or of less *empressement*, of greater or of less courtesy, than the occasion called for.

Had she indeed never heard of the awkward and painfully shy young man before, she would very probably have been induced by his evident suffering to take some pains to put him at his ease, by at once entering into conversation with him. But this she did not do. Her mother's harangue concerning him was too fresh in her memory to permit it, and this omission was the sole effect as yet produced by it. But if Kate did not converse with him, her mother did; for passing her arm under that of her dear friend, Lady de Paddington, she led her, accompanied of course by her young nephew, to the second drawing-room and thence into the sweet dimly-

lighted retreat afforded by the boudoir. And here for a few moments the young novice almost enjoyed himself, for he cordially agreed in the opinion expressed by his great-aunt that it certainly was the very prettiest thing in the world. Moreover, he had the satisfaction of hearing the sound of his own voice again, for the easy, amiable questionings of Lady Augusta, as to what he had seen in London, and how he liked it, made the effort of replying to her wonderfully more easy than he could have believed possible before their conversation began.

Lady de Paddington perceiving that her *protégé* was getting on admirably well, ventured to leave him for a few minutes, that she might indulge herself by a short tour round the rooms, chiefly for the purpose of turning the heads of all the mothers and daughters she met by making them comprehend that the first match of the season had been brought to the identical ball-room where they now found themselves *by her*, that she should be delighted to introduce this darling nephew to them, &c., &c. And then perceiving in the most satisfactory manner that she had made herself of immense consequence to them all, and that dinners and opera

boxes would be speedily at her feet, she suddenly bustled back to the boudoir, declaring that her dear Edward would think she had forsaken him.

She found her friend Lady Augusta still busily engaged in convincing Lord Goldstable that he was the most lucky fellow in the world, for having made acquaintance so early in his career with such a very kind and charming person as Lady Augusta Harrington; for she had already given him to understand that in consequence of the tender friendship existing between his admirable Aunt de Paddington and herself, she felt the truest interest for *him*, and that she hoped and trusted that whenever he had an hour to spare he would bestow it upon them! *An hour to spare!* He who had not the very slightest idea what he was to do with himself during all the multitude of hours that he was going to pass in London! Certainly, Lady Augusta Harrington was the most delightful woman he had ever seen in his life; and if the beautiful daughter was but as kind to him as the mother, it should not be his fault if he did not give the go-by to all the young fellows in London, and carry her off as his bride.

He had very fully arrived, at this conclusion, when his aunt, Lady de Paddington, re-entered the boudoir. The two ladies interchanged one rapid glance; it was very rapid, yet it said plainly, "All goes well," on the part of Lady Augusta, which the answering glance said as distinctly, assisted by a very slight movement of the head, "Go then, and leave me with him."

Need it be said that Lady Augusta took the hint?

"Now then, dear Edward, tell me what you think of a London ball-room?" said Lady de Paddington, gaily. "Can you deny that there is something enchanting in the whole scene?"

"It is all beautiful, aunt!" eagerly responded the young man. "It is almost midnight, I believe, yet I will be hanged if I don't think it is lighter than mid-day."

"And the splendid dresses, Edward, and the beautiful women? I flatter myself that you are not conscious of any feeling like disappointment."

"Not I, indeed, Aunt de Paddington. But I can tell you that the girl you called Miss Harrington is the handsomest of them all. She is

for all the world like what one sees in a picture. I don't at all wonder at what you told me, about all the young fellows wanting to marry her."

"It will be your own fault, Edward, if any young man succeeds in that quarter except yourself. Just remember all I told you about her dislike to all young puppies. But hark! they are beginning to play a waltz. Come directly, and ask her to dance. As you are the stranger, and the man of greatest consequence in the room, it is absolutely necessary that she should open the ball with you. Come with me directly, Edward. There she is!"

Not one word of all his aunt had told him respecting Miss Harrington had escaped his memory; and it was therefore with a stouter heart than he had himself dared to hope for, that he now approached her, and said in a much steadier voice than might have been expected:

"Aunt de Paddington says, Miss Harrington, that you and I ought to dance the first waltz together. Will you, please?"

"I would have done so with pleasure, my Lord," she replied good-humouredly, "but that I am engaged."

"Dear me!" returned the young peer, looking considerably disappointed, "I wonder what we had better do, then? I will go and ask her, shall I?" And away he went to consult his instructress on this unforeseen emergency.

Kate, meanwhile, stood up to dance with Mr. Caldwell, the young barrister, and her doing so was in fulfilment of an engagement of some days' standing.

It had by this time become sufficiently clear both to the gentleman and lady, as well as to Uncle Walter, that the moments they spent together were far sweeter than any other moments in their lives. The young man, indeed, had very stoutly made up his mind to attempt, without further delay, to secure a continuance of these delightful moments for life; and it would be inconsistent with the veracity of her historian to pretend that no idea of the same sort had ever presented itself to Kate. In truth, Kate knew perfectly well, or to speak more correctly, she believed without any mixture of doubt, that she was beloved; nor did she make any attempt to conceal from herself that the love she had inspired was reflected back again from her own heart, and that nothing less than

the breaking of that heart could destroy the image impressed upon it. Kate was very young, and very young people are generally sanguine in the view they take of the future; had she been a few years older, her imagination might not have passed so rapidly, or so easily, over the impediments which were pretty sure to intervene between her and her hopes.

As to the young man himself, though he was a good ten years her senior, he was, to say the least of it, fully as sanguine as her hopeful self in his contemplation of the future. But his hopefulness was of a totally different kind. Perhaps he knew, even better than Kate herself, how utterly her mother, and it might be her reverend father too, would scorn, and how resolutely they would reject, such an offer as he could make her. But the conviction of all this did not discourage him. Frederick Caldwell was in many respects a singular young man; and the view which he took of the probable result of the step he was resolved to take, was more influenced by his own character than by the apparent circumstances of the case.

He felt quite certain, and his opinion on this point was perfectly correct, that he should not,

and could not, have fallen in love with Kate had she in any particular, or in any degree, inherited the intellectual peculiarities, or the social views and opinions, of her parents.

The beauty of the young girl had certainly appeared to him of a peculiarly captivating character, but this would never have sufficed to induce him to seek her as a wife. But it had chanced that they had more than once fallen into conversation together, in a strain not quite so common-place as he had usually found to prevail among the young and lovely of his female acquaintance; and the opinions he contrived to elicit from her were for the most part so exceedingly unlike what he probably expected from the daughter of the Warden of All Saints, and the Lady Augusta his wife, that he was caught almost as much by the feeling of surprise as of admiration.

One of the earliest thoughts suggested to him by the closely observant study which he bestowed upon her character, was that such a creature as Kate Harrington would never permit herself to be wooed, and won, by any man whose chief claim to her favour consisted either in rank or in riches. He was himself a gentle-

man by birth and education; and though his fortune was not such as to justify his feeling himself independent of the profession which the father he had so recently lost had chosen for him, it was sufficient to make him feel very nearly indifferent to the fact that the young lady he loved was comparatively rich.

Never for an instant did the idea occur to him that her being so would influence her reception of his proposal; and as to the opposition which, as a matter of course, he knew would arise from the evident vanity and ambition of her parents, he looked at it certainly without alarm, and almost with indifference; for who, knowing Kate as he knew her, could believe that she would permit herself to be the victim of such opinions, or yield to any authority which would seek to enforce them?

As yet, however, he had not proposed to her, but Kate, as we have said, was pretty certain that he would; and the nonsense which her mother had talked about Lord Goldstable, was most assuredly not remembered by her as being sufficiently important to increase any difficulties she might have to encounter, when she declared it to be her intention to accept his hand.

But neither the gravity of this her fixed determination, nor any doubts or fears respecting its effect upon her family, could prevent her enjoying the happiness of the passing hour; for was she not dancing to sweet music? and was not the man she loved her partner? And she yielded herself to the influence of these circumstances, according to the ancient and immemorial custom of eighteen.

Before this first dance was over, Lord Brandling, a College friend and companion of Mr. Caldwell's, had engaged her for the ensuing quadrille, so that a second application from poor Lord Goldstable proved as unsuccessful as the first. But on this subject his aunt had in the interval given him a useful hint, by which he immediately profited, for when refused for the next dance, he boldly begged to be accepted for the one after; and this was accorded to him.

Lady de Paddington had meantime found a moment to ask Lady Augusta hurriedly what was the meaning of the strange mischance which had occurred? and what her daughter could be thinking of? Lady Augusta declared herself, and with very perfect sincerity, to be excessively angry.

"It is impossible to understand it," she exclaimed, "but I will speak to her instantly." And she drew near her beautiful daughter accordingly, and said in an angry and hurried whisper:

"Good Heaven! why are you not dancing with him? What are you dreaming of?"

"Do you mean Lord Goldstable, mamma?" replied Kate, quietly. "I am going to dance the next dance with him."

"And take care, if you please, that I see no levity of any kind!" again whispered her mother. "Your whole life may depend upon this evening. For goodness sake be careful!" And so saying the anxious mother and the gracious hostess glided away to a distant part of the room, leaving Kate to finish her dance with Lord Brandling; but this time the poor girl thought more of the difficulties before her, and vastly less of what she was doing, than before this first change of partners had taken place. But on the second change, which made the blushing Lord Goldstable her partner, she really exerted herself to be agreeable, for she was full of good-natured consideration for his evident shyness; and so well did these efforts

succeed, that before the dance was ended the poor boy began to feel that his excellent great-aunt was quite right, and that the very best thing he could do would be to marry Miss Harrington directly.

The unaffected good-humour and quiet simplicity of her manner, had in truth made him feel completely at his ease, and so perfectly happy and comfortable, that he was quite ready to declare a fine London ball-room to be the most agreeable place in the world, and falling in love there the most agreeable, as well as the most natural occupation.

Nevertheless he discreetly determined that he would not be *too* much in a hurry, and therefore very deliberately decided that he should postpone the making an offer of marriage to the charming young lady, so skilfully and so kindly selected for him, till the next quadrille, for which he engaged her as soon as she had given him to understand that the next dance was a polka, for his Lordship did not "polk" (the last May Fair supplement to "Johnson's Dictionary," if we be correctly informed, contains this verb), and therefore his rival, his perfectly unconscious rival, Mr. Caldwell, had the

advantage of being her partner during the intervening dance. Now this trifling delay caused, as it turned out, an important change in the aspect of Kate Harrington's affairs; and it furnishes an important lesson to all young men at present entering upon life, by showing the immense importance that may, and probably must, attach to their learning to *polk*.

At the conclusion of the quadrille a pause ensued in the dancing, occasioned by the entrance of half a dozen ice-trays, which had to win their by no means easy way round the ball-room.

"The whist-table is in your cell, Miss Harrington, is it not?" said Mr. Caldwell. "Shall we pay your father a visit? The crowd here, just now, is perfectly overpowering."

"It will indeed be a great relief to get into a cooler atmosphere," replied Kate; and they made their way accordingly through the ice-eaters who had established themselves on the staircase, and succeeded, though not without some little difficulty, in getting to the card-room.

Here they found eight very comfortable looking ladies and gentlemen, so quietly amusing themselves at whist that they really looked as if

they intended to exhibit the strongest possible contrast to the scene below, to all such as might seek refuge there from the brilliant suffocation of the ball-room.

Kate paused behind the chair of her father for a moment; but that moment was a critical one, for the fate of the rubber depended upon the odd trick, for which the parties were in the very act of struggling.

"Well, papa, how goes the game?" said Kate.

"Lost! if you come and talk to me, my dear," replied the Doctor. "Pray go away," he added, very gravely.

Whereupon his daughter, who really felt shocked and penitent at having been guilty of so ill-timed an intrusion, took advantage of the open window which led to her recently completed conservatory, and stepped out into the midst of her own roses and geraniums. And it so happened, that before she stepped in again she had accepted Mr. Caldwell as her affianced husband, just as her father exclaimed in a voice of triumph the important word, "Won."

Miss Harrington danced the next quadrille according to promise, with Lord Goldstable.

They spoke but little during the dance, for Kate was rather absent, and her noble partner was screwing his courage to the sticking place and considering how best to word the proposal, which he had determined to make the moment he had led her to a seat. Nor did he, even when this tremendous moment arrived, shrink from his purpose.

"Miss Harrington," said he, placing himself beside her in a corner which was fortunately at that moment perfectly unoccupied, "my aunt, Lady de Paddington, Miss Harrington, who knows London well and all the people in it, I believe, my aunt tells me that my having such a large fortune and a coronet too, you know, would be enough to make all the pretty girls in it quite ready to marry me. I am quite sure you won't say yes to me for that reason, because you are and must be, so very much above anything of the kind—but yet I hope and trust you won't say no. Do be so very good as to accept me, will you? It would make me so very happy! And I should love you so very much; and we should be so very happy together. Do say yes, will you?"

The astonishment of Kate at this unexpected

address was so great as positively to deprive her for the moment of all power to answer it. And then indignation or something like it succeeded to surprise, and her complexion which had been considerably paler than usual but a moment before, became flushed, and her eyes flashed too. But before she could turn their angry glances full upon the offender, she became so conscious of the absurdity of her own situation and of his, that if she had looked at him at all she would very probably have committed the extreme impropriety of laughing.

The feelings which led to this were not, however, likely to last long; she felt that however ludicrous his mode of wooing her might be, it must very gravely and very effectually be put an end to; and the anger of her indignant mother then came before her with so much distinctness, that the drollery of the business was very speedily forgotten.

Lord Goldstable meanwhile stood beside her twitching the tips of his gloves, and shifting from one foot to the other in an agony of uncertainty as to what was to be done or said next. At length, however, Kate turned gravely but gently towards him, and said:

"Your opinion of me is very flattering, my Lord, but believe me you will spare both yourself and me pain if you will say no more upon the subject."

Her voice betrayed agitation, which the young man immediately perceived, and that with very considerable satisfaction, for he thought to himself that it was as clear as daylight that they both felt just the same. It was therefore with renewed spirit that he replied:

"Not say any more upon the subject? How can you say such a thing? But you can't think it, I am sure of that. Not say anything indeed! Oh! Miss Harrington, I don't think I shall ever be able to talk about anything else! No, then, I know I shan't, so it's no good to expect it. And then they say—that is, *she* says—that it is the very best thing in the world for me to do. Come, now, do say yes! But at any rate don't say no!—Silence you know!—Eh! Miss Harrington? Well, then, only just say that you will dance with me again after the next polka. How I do wish I could dance the polka." And as he said this he turned suddenly towards her, and attempted to take her hand.

She rose suddenly for the purpose of leaving him, for at that moment she felt she had no power of bringing this most absurd scene to a conclusion in any other way.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" he cried, "you are not going away, are you? Pray don't, Miss Harrington! I am not going, you know, to think that you are in love with me *now*, I don't expect such a thing. But indeed, indeed I'll do everything you like; and upon my honour I'll make you quite comfortable and—and—all right now, isn't it?"

At this moment a rapid step approached, and on looking up Kate saw Mr. Caldwell standing close to her. She instantly passed her arm under his and walked away, flattering herself that the reception she had given to the young rustic's strange attempt at love-making, was such as would effectually prevent his renewing it.

CHAPTER XV.

Lady de Paddington's first care on learning from her hopeful *protégé* that he had actually "popped the question," as he gracefully expressed himself, and that "though the young lady had not said *yes*, she had certainly not said *no*," was to assure him that he ought to feel extremely flattered and perfectly satisfied with this, for that no reasonable young man, let him be whom he would, could expect more under the circumstances.

"I don't mean to blame you, Edward," she continued, very affectionately, "quite the contrary, I assure you; but you certainly were *rather* hasty, you know, and her not refusing you outright is quite proof sufficient that she means to accept you—therefore, on the whole, I am rather

glad that you lost no time about it. But I certainly did not expect that you would be quite so much in a hurry. I thought that you might begin to be a little particular perhaps, and that at supper you might have *hinted* that you were charmed with her more than you had ever been with anybody. But I had no notion, my dear boy, that you would absolutely propose before the end of the second dance."

"*Hinted!*" exclaimed the youth in an accent indicative of something very like contempt. "Why, didn't you tell me, aunt, that all the finest young fellows in London were after her? Much good I should have done by *hinting* shou'dn't I?"

This lively sally was received with a gracious nod, and an approving smile, by the scheming aunt, who forthwith hurried off to report progress to Lady Augusta.

"And what did Kate say? What answer did she give him?" returned Lady Augusta, colouring with sudden emotion. "He has been determined to lose no time, at all events," she added.

"Thanks to my priming," returned Lady de Paddington, laughing. "Just look round at

all the bright young eyes, and at all the motherly glances directed towards him, and then say whether I was not right when I resolved that no time should be lost?"

"Oh! perfectly right! most perfectly right," was Lady Augusta's grateful rejoinder. "But I should like to know how Kate received it," she added. "We can scarcely expect that she should manifest an equally sudden attachment, you know; not that I shall permit any shilly-shally nonsense on her part; nor would her father permit it either. It will all end as it ought to do. You may depend on *us* for that. But she must have been a good deal surprised, I think."

"That is just what I said to Edward," replied her friend; "but though he did not tell me in reply exactly her very words, he seemed to be perfectly contented with them. He only stated in a general way, that he had *not* been refused; and that he had given her to understand, when somebody came up and interrupted them, that he considered everything was right between them."

"Of course, after what I said to her," returned Lady Augusta, "there could be no

danger of her offering any serious opposition; but girls will be girls, you know; and they don't always like to let things of this kind be settled too easily. However, I will no more quarrel with our bride for being *trop facile*, than he will quarrel with her for being *trop belle*. Everything is just as it ought to be, dearest Lady Paddington; and depend upon it I shall never forget the friendly feelings you have manifested on this occasion. Kate shall be a good niece to you; I will take care of that."

And then the ladies parted, "that they might not," as Lady de Paddington said, "be suspected of plotting together."

Lady Augusta, perfectly satisfied by what she had already heard, nodded her approval of this discreet separation, and then stepped forward among her guests with a prouder eye, and a prouder step, than before; for the news she had heard was glorious news, and the value she put upon it was not small; it might be perhaps a little beyond what it was worth.

Meanwhile, the affairs of another pair of mortals were, to all appearance, progressing

towards their desired termination. By means of Henry Harrington's good-nature, and habitual indifference to everything like right honourable etiquette, Mr. Garble, the young attorney, who has been already presented to the reader, received a card of invitation to this splendid and every way important ball, and he and pretty Miss Mary Jane Wigginsville employed nearly the whole evening in "taking sweet counsel together."

It was in vain that the Lady Juliana made not the slightest effort to conceal her profound disgust and indignation thereat, for the holy flirtation had gone a great deal too far to be checked by any harmless, although vehement opposition. It was in vain that her moody Ladyship had the courage to utter very audibly the words, "low worlding," to her sister, the Lady Augusta, as they passed together within hearing of the tender pair. It touched them not, or, at any rate, it seemed not to touch them. And yet the epithets, alas! both epithets, were merited.

To the censure conveyed by the painful epithet *low*, he was decidedly obnoxious; for not only was he a special attorney, but no one

had ever heard any reference made to the fact of his having had a father; and as to the charge of his being a worlding, we have strong reasons for suspecting the circumstances of his second birth to be quite as doubtful and unsatisfactory as those of his first.

Nevertheless, pretty little Miss Mary Jane found the attorney's sweet counsel too pleasant to be sacrificed, even to her habitual reverence for her noble friend's title or her godliness. It was very plainly evident, indeed, that Miss Mary Jane nourished the hope that they might "walk together in the house of God as friends" —nay, it might be perhaps as something more!

It really seemed fated that this very remarkable evening should be to her, as well as to Kate Harrington, the most memorable she had ever passed; for before the end of it Mr. Garble found courage, notwithstanding the dazzling station of the friends by whom she was surrounded, to ascertain distinctly what might be his chance of obtaining a comfortable provision for life through the agency of her fair hand and tender heart.

Nevertheless, although Mr. Garble was not a man generally troubled by nervous weakness, he

deferred the decisive question till the genial hour of supper.

Seated close beside her, while the eyes and thoughts of those around were occupied by other things, he felt that he might speak and she might hear what could not so safely be pronounced at any other time. Not that the hours preceding supper were idly spent by him; far from it. He was indeed but a novice in the peculiar phraseology of godly love-making; but some few holy phrases were familiar to him, and he felt certain that he should be able to introduce them to great advantage. Before we give any specimen of the skill with which this was achieved, it may be as well to mention that the eloquence of Mr. Garble had on all subjects one marked peculiarity, namely, that of constantly removing the letter h from the beginning of every word where it usually appeared, and atoning for the theft by scrupulously prefixing it to every word where it did not.

"Oh, dearest Miss Mary Jane!" he murmured, "if it were the Lord's blessed will those lips could eal the eart those heyes ave wounded, and that only by letting judgment go for the plaintiff. Grant me my suit, Miss

Mary Jane, and this will be the appiest our of my life!"

"Oh, Mr. Garble!" was the only reply Miss Mary Jane could articulate.

"Surely, it would be for the glory of eaven," he resumed, "that two serious earts should hexecute a bond and covenant on ymen's halter!" softly whispered the attorney.

"A holy love is indeed a blessed thing," returned the gentle lady, with a sigh; "but, oh, Mr. Garble, this carnal scene is not a place to speak of such a subject."

"But only tell me that my hanxious eart may ope," he replied in the very tenderest of whispers; "only promise that you will consult the Lord in his good time. Let me take a *rule nisi*. Oh, dearest Miss Mary Jane, grant me a *rule nisi!*"

Miss Mary Jane returned a look by no means calculated to generate any feeling of despair; and then she suffered the ardent little man to take her hand furtively beneath the sheltering table-cloth, and press it in his own.

After this it would be surely unjust to accuse Mr. Garble of presumption, even though he did lay down to rest that night without feeling the

poisoned horror of despair rankling in his heart.

* * * * *

Let it not be supposed that the hour of supper had arrived, without Lord Goldstable's having been presented to sundry thoughtful mothers and pretty daughters, none of whom were inclined to neglect this fortunate opportunity of entering themselves for the "great Goldstable stakes." It was of course to Lady de Paddington that all petitions for an introduction were addressed, and these petitions it was in most cases of course impossible to refuse; but true as steel to her purpose of bestowing this great prize on the daughter of her devoted friend, Lady Augusta, she invariably accompanied every introduction by the following words, whispered in the ear where it was most important they should be registered: "Only fancy! so very young as he looks, that he should be engaged already."

This was certainly under the circumstances the best and most easy course to take, and it promptly and effectually nipped many young hopes in the bud, or, in other words, it served to warn trespassers off the preserves, and that

too in a manner which could not be called otherwise than civil.

Nevertheless, there was one enterprizing individual whose steadfast purpose was not to be checked by any such gentle means; nay, the startled Lady de Paddington was soon made to understand that not even a point-blank refusal, though uttered in the most direct and unmitigated manner, could avail her.

But this individual was of a species known to be by far the most dangerous extant. Not the loveliest and most designing daughter, nor the shrewdest and most intriguing mother, could be compared to her, for this individual was a widow!—young, lovely, intriguing, designing, shrewd—and a widow! But this widow is by far too important a personage to be introduced at the end of a chapter.

CHAPTER XVI.

Mrs. Fitzjames, so was this beauteous young widow called, was a lady who would never have been found at the house of Lady Augusta and Doctor Harrington by their own good will; but she had been brought thither by a very free and easy person and one whom they neither chose to offend, namely, the identical Miss Puddingthwaite who has already been introduced to the reader.

It is not exactly correct, however, to say that she was *brought* thither by this accommodating and *passe par-tout* lady, for not even the temptation of showing herself at so brilliant a party as that now given by Lady Augusta Harrington, could have induced Mrs. Fitzjames to

have made a toilet so hurried as would have been required, to enable her to accompany that reconnoitring lady, at the early hour at which she had chosen to make her appearance there. Nay, even if the elaborate business of dressing could *par impossible* have been got through in time, yet still Mrs. Fitzjames would not have accompanied her at that hour, for she knew too well what she should lose by it.

A very well-dressed, and very beautiful young woman cannot be seen under any circumstances without creating a certain degree of attention, admiration, and curiosity; but far different is the degree in which these desirable effects are produced if she be first looked at when weary of waiting in a half-filled room, instead of being for the first time seen to make her slow and graceful entry through an admiring crowd, whose eager glances both excite, and account for, that pretty fascinating expression which hovers between coquetry and embarrassment.

It was *thus* that Mrs. Fitzjames chose to make her *entrée* into every ball-room, and it was thus she made her *entrée* now into that of Lady Augusta Harrington.

The maiden name of Mrs. Fitzjames was Barlow. She was the daughter of a broken-down, but very gentlemanlike and handsome-looking Colonel Barlow, who, having sold his commission, as well as nearly everything else which he could convert into ready money, had systematically taken to living upon his wits just about the time that his daughter had completed her seventeenth year.

The poor girl's mother had, at this time, been several years dead, but it was only upon the death of her maternal grandmother that she had been handed over to her precious father for protection. It is highly probable that this protection would have been altogether refused, had the young lady been as plain as she was strikingly the reverse; but no sooner had her admiring father looked at her after the interval of about seven years, than he decided that he would himself take the charge of her.

What his projects were concerning her, may be doubtful; they might be no worse than having for their object the selling her as a wife to the first man, old or young, handsome or ugly, worthy or worthless, who was rich enough

to bid for her; but the ruined gambler had a run of ill-luck, which settled the matter at once. A certain Major-General Fitzjames happened to win of him a sum considerably larger than he was able to raise, whereupon his unfortunate daughter's fair hand was generously accepted as payment in full for the debt, without entering very scrupulously into the question of whether the blooming Sophia were willing or not.

But even had the parties considered this branch of the subject as being of any real importance, it is probable the result would have been the same; for the blooming Sophia was already extremely disgusted with her papa's style of housekeeping, which consisted of eternal scoldings because she spent too much, and eternal complainings because his luxuries were too few. And so, without the shadow of a principle to keep her right, and every species of inclination to go wrong, the beautiful girl of seventeen became the dashing bride of the *débauché* of forty-seven, and took up her residence in a smart-looking lodging, *au troisième*, on the Boulevard des Italiens at Paris.

Her father, however, very soon changed his quarters from Paris to New Orleans, and his daughter never heard of him more.

She lived with her gay husband for about a dozen gay, though not particularly respectable years, and was then left considerably improved in beauty, and considerably deteriorated in character, with the pension of a General's widow, and a good many gay trinkets.

She might certainly have lived much better on her pension in Paris than in London; but Mrs. Fitzjames was not without ambition, and as yet she had not felt any of the illness that attends it. Miss Puddingthwaite was her father's first cousin, nay, it had once been rumoured that there had been some passages of love between them; but, be this as it may, it is certain that when the strikingly lovely and very stylish-looking Mrs. General Fitzjames claimed kindred with her in all the modest elegance of black and grey, Miss Puddingthwaite received her very graciously, and speedily determined to extend to her a little of the influence, which she had contrived from various lucky accidents to have acquired in the fashionable world.

Nevertheless, this much-needed assistance was not bestowed without some mixture of interested calculation on the part of the bestower, for Miss Puddingthwaite, although from many fortunate accidents she had obtained a footing in very high society, was by no means unmindful that such a face, figure, and general appearance as those of her cousin, Mrs. General Fitzjames, might often be useful to her.

In short, the claims of her Parisian cousin to her friendship were welcomed, rather than repelled; and having once determined upon this line of conduct, Miss Puddingthwaite was not a person to be turned out of her path by any one. She had, therefore, upon this occasion, as well as upon many others where *large* parties were given, asked and obtained, a card of invitation for her cousin; and in this way, the beautiful Mrs. General Fitzjames was already beginning to be talked of as one of the lovliest women in London in many drawing-rooms; and it may be that, in more than one club-room, these speculations upon her beauty were accompanied by less flattering speculations respecting her character.

Her husband had been dead about two years

at the time our narrative falls in with her at the house of Dr. Harrington, and she was now thirty-one years old. But not a shadow of diminution had as yet fallen upon her beauty; on the contrary, she was decidedly more captivating now than she had been at the time of her marriage. An extremely beautiful woman, while under five-and-twenty, is apt to show her consciousness of the power which she never can altogether resist; and though many may be ready to declare that this *naïve* vanity becomes her, it is nevertheless pretty certain that she may employ her power with more assured success, when she has learnt to conceal the youthful consciousness that she possesses it.

At any rate, Mrs. General Fitzjames was unquestionably more passionately admired now than she had ever been at any former period of her life; and she was fully aware of this, and also very fully determined to profit by it. In one word, she was as fully entitled to be called a dangerous woman as any to whom the phrase was ever applied. She was in figure tall, and decidedly more slight and fragile in appearance than plump; nevertheless, she possessed in an eminent degree that peculiar feline grace of

movement, and natural picturesqueness of attitude which is never found to accompany any form of bony angularity. Her hands and feet were models of delicate symmetry—the long lithe throat which sprung proudly from her skilfully half-dropped shoulders, rescued the whole figure from any charge of insignificance; and the small Greek-shaped head, wreathed with the luxuriant tresses of her dark brown hair, though not perhaps formed to excite the adoration of Messieurs Spurzheim and Gall, would have assuredly received due worship from Titian or Correggio.

But the face—yet why should we say but? —the face was beautiful, decidedly, undeniably beautiful. It had beauty of outline, beauty of feature, and beauty of colouring; but those who were gifted with the power of looking at her, without falling in love at first sight, might see on it occasional shadows of meaning which were certainly not lovely.

Her dark eyes were bright and sparkling, in truth, they almost glittered with the brilliancy of foil; but the small, bright red mouth, with its rapid and often recurring smiles, was frequently at variance, as it were, with the

expression of those glittering eyes; and this, to a keen observer, imparted a character of insincerity to the whole countenance.

Mrs. Fitzjames, however, laughed musically; talked fluently, wittily, and occasionally without much restraint; she moreover danced like a fairy, sang like a nightingale, and was, in fact, what all fast young men call in their vulgar jargon "a splendid creature."

With all those gifts and graces, and with the countenance of Miss Puddingthwaite, and of one or two aristocratic connexions of her husband, she had contrived without much difficulty to obtain a certain footing in a certain set, consisting principally of that section of the fashionable world whose mode of life and conduct would be "really too bad for anything," if they were *not* members of the fashionable world.

Now, the beautiful Mrs. Fitzjames was quite aware that she was an extremely lucky lady in finding herself so placed, and she was very fully determined not to waste the brief space of time, during which she might still hope to obtain a permanent position in the brilliant set who seemed to be so very good-natured to her; in

a word, she felt that this was her time, or none, to open for herself "the world, her oyster," and in such a sort too, as to make her independent of all its caprices for the entire term of her natural life.

Such was the lady who appeared suddenly before the eyes of Lord Goldstable, just after Kate had withdrawn herself from his sight.

Mrs. Fitzjames had already made herself acquainted with all the *most interesting* particulars concerning him; and having learnt these, she looked at him. She looked at him, indeed, very attentively; and most certainly there was no want of "speculation in the eyes that she did look withal." She addressed herself to Lady de Paddington, and requested that she would do her the favour of introducing her young nephew to her. To this request she received a positive refusal, upon the pretence that Lord Goldstable was so shy, that it was painful to him to be introduced to strangers. But Mrs. Fitzjames was not likely to be so easily defeated. Of course she uttered no word of remonstrance, but bowing slightly, and smiling rather more slightly still, she passed on. Lady de Paddington walked on likewise,

and immediately left the ball-room in search of Lady Augusta, being eager to tell her of the dangerous request which had been made, and also the ready wit with which she had refused it.

Mrs. Fitzjames watched her as she left the room, and then gently and gracefully drew near to the young man, and having caught his eye she looked at him timidly, yet smilingly, for a moment, and then said:

"Lord Goldstable, you have no recollection of me, I dare say?"

"Recollection, Ma'am? no, Ma'am, I can't say I have; I'm afraid not!" said Lord Goldstable, colouring violently.

"Nay," she replied, with a smile of irresistible sweetness, "I am not the least surprized to hear you say so: it is so very natural that you should have forgotten me! But I remember well having seen you, I won't say how many years ago, in Scotland. Our fathers, Lord Goldstable, were great friends at that time; but when my poor dear father settled abroad, his Scotch friends saw no more of him. I do not see, however, why we should not renew our old acquaintance. My name now is Mrs. Fitzjames,

but you never heard of me by that name, I dare say. However, you must have heard of me, I think, as Sophia Barlow."

Lord Goldstable heard that name now for the first time, and it would have been equally new to his noble father had he been there to hear it now; nor had the beautiful Sophia ever been at any period of her existence within some hundred miles of the "land of cakes." But what did that signify?

The notion, however, of meeting an old friend, though an unremembered one, was very pleasant to the shy youth; so colouring up to the roots of his pale hair, partly from embarrassment, and partly from pleasure, he stammered out:

"I'm sure you are very kind, Ma'am. I dare say I might, if I was to try to recollect—I'm sure I don't know—"

And there he stopped. But the more fluent lady relieved his embarrassment by continuing, with gay and smiling rapidity:

"Well then, now we must be very great friends; I am sure we ought, dear Lord Goldstable, for many reasons. We ought to be friends, because our fathers were friends before us; and I think, too, we ought to be friends

because we both seem to be strangers in this immense crowd."

"Indeed, yes, Ma'am," said Lord Goldstable, looking at her more steadily, and thinking as he did so, how *very*, *very* beautiful she was.

"Oh, don't say Ma'am," she replied, with a still kinder smile; "it sounds so very formal. Your dear father always used to call me Sophia. I was but a baby then, to be sure, but yet the idea of it is pleasant to one who has so few friends as I have now. I am so perfectly a stranger here, Lord Goldstable, that the name of an old friend goes to my very heart."

"Dear me," returned Lord Goldstable, "I should think that everybody in the world must be your friends—and I did not suppose that any one could be a stranger here, excepting myself."

"Alas! no one can be so completely a stranger as I am," she replied, and with a movement that seemed most perfectly natural in so old an acquaintance, she passed her beautiful white arm under his.

"You have lost your father," she resumed, as they slowly walked on together, "and so have I,

dear friend; but I have lost my poor husband too! It is true he was as old, or, I believe, rather older, than my dear papa, and therefore I was never, you know, what people call *in love* with him, but he was always very kind and good to me. I used to call him, my dear old Robin Grey. Do you know the song of 'Old Robin Grey,' Lord Goldstable?"

"Oh yes, I know that to be sure; that is a real old Scotch song, you know."

"Well, then, if you will come and call upon me to-morrow, I will sing it to you," said she kindly, "and then we really shall be like old friends. Will you come, dear Edward?"

"Yes, that I will," replied the greatly delighted youth, giving a friendly pressure to the fair arm which rested on his. "How good-natured it is of you to call me by my name. How did you know that my name was Edward?"

"Because I remembered it, old friend," she unblushingly replied.

And, in truth, she did remember it, and the recollection served her well. She had read, not only his name and age in the peerage, but the names of all his race, and of all their mansions,

and she knew them as well by heart as she did the christian appellation which she now so dexterously ventured to give him.

For the arrival of the youthful nobleman in London, was by far too interesting a fact to be long a secret to any whom it might concern, even to the far-away gossipings of many who might live and die without beholding him; and that the piercing intellect of Miss Puddingthwaite should have speedily acquired all the information it was possible for her to obtain concerning him, was truly a matter of course. In addition, however, to all that her patronising cousin could tell her on the subject, Mrs. Fitzjames had the good sense to seek for all the solid information that the peerage could give her, and this enabled her with the most easy and graceful assurance to carry on her "old friend" fable, without the slightest fear of making any important blunder.

As to Lord Goldstable himself, he was speedily becoming a new man under the happy influences of this cleverly-imagined old friendship; he was not only rapidly recovering the power of speech, but was every instant becoming more thoroughly aware of the value of

his eyes. He not only totally forgot all that his aunt had said to him about Miss Harrington, but all and everything which he had so lately spoken to that young lady in consequence of it.

From having felt so painfully overpowered by the newness of everything around him, that he would almost have given one of his fingers to have found himself fairly rid of it all, and snugly tucked up in his bed; he suddenly began to fancy that he had never been so happy before in the whole course of his life, and that there was no danger of his ever feeling shy again, so that he could but keep out of the way of all stiff, formal people, and always keep near such a dear, delightful, beautiful old friend as he now felt gently leaning upon his arm.

"Well to be sure," he exclaimed, in a tone of the most innocent and heartfelt satisfaction, "nothing was ever farther from my thoughts when I came in here, than that I should meet an old friend. It is such an unaccountable piece of good-luck, that I feel as if I could never be thankful enough for it. And now I think we ought to begin and tell one another everything that has happened to us since we used to play together in Scotland. Where did

you go to school? Or did you have a governess at home, in the same way that I had a tutor?"

"Did you never go to school, dear Edward?" returned the lady, bending forward, and looking innocently up in his face. "Now that is another odd resemblance between us, for I never went to school either. My poor dear papa undertook the care of my education entirely himself."

"Only think of that now," cried the delighted Lord Goldstable, who really began to fancy that he must have known her in some previous state of existence, because, as he told her, he had felt so delightfully free from shyness with her from the very first.

And then, before they began dancing together, which of course they had agreed to do, Mrs. Fitzjames declared that she was perishing for want of a little change of air and refreshment, and that he must take her down stairs to the supper-room.

The delighted boy, whose shyness seemed completely banished, leaving nothing but the very happiest hilarity in its place, agreed to the proposal by a declaration that it was exactly the thing he should like best in the world; and

accordingly they set off together arm-in-arm, he carrying her bouquet in his right hand, while she playfully threw her lace scarf over his left, upon which arm her own delicate hand still rested.

Just as they reached the door leading out upon the staircase, they found themselves exactly in front of Lady de Paddington, who had placed herself near it for the sake of imbibing a little fresher air than the ball-room afforded.

Mrs. Fitzjames was not quite a novice, but was, on the contrary, fully aware of all the disagreeable feelings which were likely to agitate the breast of the dowager, upon perceiving how little she had gained by refusing the introduction she had asked for, and, to say the truth, she enjoyed this little vengeance exceedingly.

Lord Goldstable's first notion on seeing her, was that he must of course immediately introduce to her the charming old friend whom he had had the great good-luck to stumble upon; but the skilful Sophia whispered close, very close to his ear, "Not now!"

And then, drawing him on immediately before the old lady in order to pass through

the door, she said, in accents very distinctly audible:

"Tell me, dear Edward, who is that old lady you came with?"

"Hush!" whispered Lord Goldstable, "she will hear you!" But that was all he said, and they passed down the stairs closely linked together, and without taking any farther notice of the frowning great-aunt. Lady de Paddington felt as if she must sink on the floor, and really looked very much as if she were about to be visited by a fit of apoplexy. No words are strong enough to describe her astonishment and indignation. When asked for the introduction she had so unceremoniously refused, she had soothed herself with the complacent feeling of being wide-awake, muttering to herself as she turned away from the beautiful but disappointed petitioner:

"Introduce him to her! A very likely thing, of all the women in London! It would be as good as throwing up the game at once!"

Yet now, what had this refusal availed her? Had it not just sufficed to prove that she had no efficient power either to grant or to refuse? For three miserable moments and a half she remained

on the spot where they had left her as if paralyzed; but then she recovered herself sufficiently to call to our friend Mr. White, who was at no great distance, and in a very coaxing accent, said to him:

"Do, dear Mr. White, have the great kindness to find out my nephew, Lord Goldstable, for me. I think he is gone into the supper-room. Will you, my dear Sir, be so extremely good as to tell him from me, that I suddenly feel myself extremely unwell, and that it is absolutely necessary that I should go home immediately. Say *immediately*, absolutely this very moment, my good Sir, and that I am only waiting for him."

Mr. White, after delaying for a moment to profess his profound regret at the nature of the message he was commissioned to carry, darted down the stairs with headlong speed to perform his errand. It was the first occupation of any kind that he had had that evening, and he felt it to be quite a blessing.

He had to return, however, not with Lord Goldstable, but with Lord Goldstable's answer, which he distinctly delivered in these words:

"Lord Goldstable desired me to tell your

Ladyship, that he is exceedingly sorry to hear of your Ladyship's indisposition; but that you need not trouble yourself about waiting for him, for that he was not near ready to go yet, and that the carriage of a very old friend of his would set him down when the ball was over."

This most alarmingly independent reply was a severe and most unexpected blow to Lord Goldstable's great-aunt; but she felt that for the moment, at least, all interference and all remonstrance must be vain; but not choosing that the detestable Mrs. Fitzjames should have the triumph of witnessing her discomfiture, she persevered in her intention of going home, soothing her wounded feelings as well as she might, by meditating upon the very spirited and decisive line of conduct she should pursue on the morrow.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Fitzjames, who understood the meaning of Lady de Paddington's embassy a good deal better than the unsuspicious individual to whom it was addressed, was not idle; nor was she slow in deciding upon the line of conduct which it would be best for her to pursue under the circumstances.

A short interval of silence followed the dismissal of Lady de Paddington's messenger; and

then the beautiful dark eyes of Mrs. Fitzjames were timidly and almost tenderly raised to the face of Lord Goldstable.

"My dear Edward," she then said, while a sigh agitated the delicate lace which shaded, without concealing, her bosom. "My dear Edward, do you know, that though I felt so very happy a few moments ago, I have now some very miserable thoughts tormenting me?"

"What about?" said Lord Goldstable, pressing her pretty arm very lovingly. "I won't let you have any disagreeable thoughts. Tell me, what is it? What is the matter?"

"Yes, I will tell you!" she replied, in an accent of affectionate confidence. "My mind is tormented about that great-aunt of yours, that stern-looking Lady de Paddington. It has always been a name of ill omen to me, and now, if, in addition to all the rest, she should be the means of prejudicing your mind against me, it would be dreadful, indeed! I do think it would break my heart!"

Lord Goldstable was of course greatly delighted, but he was greatly puzzled too.

"Prejudice me against you?" he repeated, looking at her very lovingly. "Why should

she prejudice me against you? And what else is it that she has already done to vex you? Do tell me all about it; you may depend upon it, Sophia, that I shall take your part?"

Sophia thanked him by again pressing the arm she held, and then said:

"Can I trust you with the confidence you ask for? Yet, alas! whom should I trust, if not the oldest friend, or rather the earliest friend I ever had? The son of my poor father's faithful friend ought to be my faithful friend also, and I will, and *do* believe that you will prove so. But you must promise me, dear Edward, you must solemnly and faithfully promise me, that no syllable of what I am going to say to you shall ever pass your lips. Nay, you must not let any allusion to it escape you. It would, believe me, be doing me a cruel, in fact, an irreparable injury."

Of course "dear Edward" vowed the required vow, and that too, with very hearty energy, and a very sincere intention of keeping it.

"Now then, listen to me," resumed the fair deceiver, "and I will tell you all! A singular accident brought to my father's knowledge, the disgraceful fact that Lady de Paddington had

been *unfaithful to her husband!* and there were some unfortunate circumstances connected with the affair, which rendered it absolutely incumbent upon my poor dear father, who was the very soul of honour, to communicate to the unfortunate Lord de Paddington the fact of his dishonour! He did so, Edward, and the undying hatred of that most wicked woman to my poor father, and to me, his unoffending child, has been the result. There is nothing, Edward, no, nothing, that she would not either do or say to injure me, and I foresee, but too plainly, that she will forbid all farther intercourse between us."

"Forbid! Goodness gracious, my dear Sophia, what a fool you must take me for! *She* forbid our intercourse? By Jove, that is a good joke! If it is to come to *that*, I can promise her wicked old Ladyship that I shall clear off, and get out of her house in double quick time. Perhaps she may not remember that I am twenty-one—but I do!"

"Not for worlds would I be the cause of any disagreement between you, and any friend you valued. Oh, not for worlds!" vehemently exclaimed the lady. "Only promise me that you will not listen to any of the infamous false-

hoods that I know she is continually inventing against me—only promise me this, and I shall be satisfied. Oh no! I do not wish you to quarrel with her, or with any one else in the whole world, on my account. Only do not let her deprive me of your friendship! I am so very much a stranger in England, and have so few friends, that the loss of one so very long known to me, would be a cruel blow!"

And here a delicately embroidered handkerchief was pressed to eyes, which Lord Goldstable believed at the very bottom of his heart to be the most beautiful in the world.

It was not very likely, therefore, that he should refuse to give the promise required of him; on the contrary, he gave it again and again, and moreover, he swore by Jove, and with sundry other mighty oaths, that Lady de Paddington would soon find that he was not quite "raw enough to swallow all the gammon she chose to poke down his throat."

And so they parted, but not before Mrs. Fitzjames had given her valued friend the number of her lodging in Jermyn Street.

CHAPTER XVII.

On the morning following this important ball, both Lady Augusta Harrington and her new ally, Lady de Paddington, awoke with the consciousness of having a great deal of important business before them.

The latter felt that it would be absolutely necessary that before the day was over she should confer at length with the former; but she had another interview before her quite as important, and still more immediately necessary—namely, the one she intended to hold with her great-nephew at the breakfast-table.

Lady Augusta, too, felt that it would be absolutely necessary that she should see Lady de Paddington before the day was over; but she,

too, felt also that she had business to do that was more pressing still—namely, the reporting progress to the Doctor, and then entering upon the very decisive conversation which it was her purpose to hold with Kate.

The Dowager Lady de Paddington inhabited a stately, but grim and melancholy-looking house in Charles Street, St. James's Square. The mansion was a world too wide for her Ladyship's dowager establishment and moderate jointure; but she inhabited it rent-free: for it was her son's property, and he was abroad.

It may easily be supposed, that a very stingy and not very rich old dowager did not make so great an innovation on the habits of herself, and her small household, as must, of course, follow upon Lord Goldstable's visit to her, without the hope, or rather the certainty, of obtaining a satisfactory *quid pro quo* for it.

This branch of the subject was very far from being indifferent to her; but the notion which she had taken into her head, that this arrangement might, must, and certainly would give her great influence on the important point of disposing of his hand and coronet in marriage, was, in her estimation, of much greater

importance still. But in order not to be defrauded of her just and reasonable expectations in both matters, it was, as she was already become fully aware, absolutely necessary that she should bestir herself.

She might, perhaps, after so late a party, have preferred the dowager indulgence of taking her breakfast in bed; but if she did that, Lord Goldstable might be up and out before she left her room; and thus, a very important move in the game she had to play would be lost. By ten o'clock, therefore, she was at the breakfast-table, with her great-nephew sitting opposite to her.

After the morning salutations had been exchanged, and the question of "Tea or coffee?" answered, she began her operations. "Well, Edward," said she, smilingly, "I have to congratulate you, on having made a most favourable impression on the whole of the Harrington family. I told you, if you remember, that I was sure your shyness would not injure you in that quarter; and it is quite evident that I was right. You will indeed be a very fortunate, as well as a greatly envied man, when you have made that charming Katherine Harrington your wife."

"Good gracious, Lady de Paddington! What chance is there that I should ever make her my wife?" replied Lord Goldstable, very gaily. "Did I not tell you last night, that though she did not say *no*, when I asked her, she most certainly did not say *yes*?"

"What you told me last night, my dear Edward, was in every respect calculated to set my heart at rest upon this very important subject. No young lady in the world, brought up in the dignified and proper manner that Miss Harrington has been, could possibly, on first listening to such a proposition as you last night made her, do more than give token of acceptance by modest and maidenly silence. I know the world better than you can yet do, my dear Edward, and I do assure you that it was quite impossible her acceptance could be more properly expressed."

His young Lordship on hearing this, looked greatly more surprised than delighted.

"Well now, Aunt de Paddington," he replied, with considerable augmentation of colour, "that certainly does seem very comical to me. At any rate, I must think a little more about it, if you please, before I make up my mind. I felt

so frightened just at first, last night, that I hardly knew what I said."

"Unfortunately, Edward, it is not at all likely that other people will be equally forgetful. I happen to know that the sweet girl has already confessed to her mother, that she had never liked any one so much before in all her life; and yet, because she did not show herself to be as indelicately bold as she is the reverse, you seem inclined to change your mind, and forsake her. What would be thought of any young lady who, when a gentleman proposed to her, should answer: 'Yes, if you please, Sir—much obliged to you?'"

Lord Goldstable laughed heartily at this, with considerably more gaiety of heart than his great-aunt quite approved upon the present occasion.

"My words were not spoken as a jest, Edward," she resumed, "but to make you feel how greatly you wrong Miss Harrington, when you attribute to her the levity of having refused your offer of marriage, when it was so perfectly her intention to accept it."

"Well, aunt, we shall see bye and bye how it will all turn out," replied the youth, presenting

his coffee-cup to be replenished, with so very gay and happy a countenance, that her Ladyship became very seriously alarmed at the little effect her words seemed to have upon him. She, therefore, after filling the said coffee-cup, returned to the charge.

"Believe me, Edward," said she, with great solemnity, "that you have totally deceived yourself, if you have really taken it into your head to believe that it was the intention of Miss Harrington to refuse you; on the contrary, I can assure you, that if you should now unfortunately fancy that you no longer wished to marry her, you would find it very difficult to shake off the engagement. Her father, mother, uncle, aunt and brother, all look upon your marriage with her as perfectly settled; and, you may depend upon it, they would call upon you to explain this very extraordinary change of purpose on your part, in a manner that you might find exceedingly disagreeable."

"Do you mean, aunt, that some of the ladies and gentlemen belonging to her, would be wanting to fight me?" said he; and the light-hearted lad, who was thinking what good fun it

would be to tell his old friend Sophia the whole story, again laughed heartily.

This strong symptom of gay indifference, considerably alarmed the old lady; for not only did it prove that his promising love-fit for Miss Harrington was already passed and over, but that he had in no degree the fear of her indignation, or that of her family before his eyes. Still, however, she cheered her spirits by remembering that there was the unlimited fund of the poor boy's profound ignorance to draw upon, and she showed not the least sign of being disconcerted as she replied:

"It is very evident, my dear Edward, that you do not understand these things. Not only would the young lady's family, and society in general, consider that you were bound in honour not to recede from the proposal which, according to your own statement, you made to her last night, but even by the law of the land you would be considered guilty of breach of promise of marriage; the consequences of which would, I fear, be considerably more serious than you are aware of. Depend upon it, Edward, that after what passed last night, you may have an

action brought against you for breach of promise of marriage."

"No! you don't mean that?" said he, with a look of dismay which she did not at all like; for though it proved that her statement was believed, it proved also that he had neither intention or inclination to fulfil this imaginary engagement.

"Not mean it, Edward!" she repeated with great solemnity; "indeed, indeed, I do! Did you not offer to marry her?"

"I said to her the nonsense that I told you of last night," replied the young man, in an accent which was by no means either gay or good-humoured.

"And did she say in reply that she would not accept your hand?" demanded Lady de Paddington.

"She did not say exactly that, but she walked off without saying anything," he replied.

"Then it is my duty to tell you, Edward, that what has passed is amply sufficient to make her family consider you as her accepted lover and affianced husband. But why all this idle discussion, Edward, in order to prove that you cannot, even if you would, escape being

the happiest and the most envied man in London? Do not let us waste any more time so foolishly. It is particularly foolish to do so just now, because there is another subject upon which I wish to speak to you very seriously. Tell me, how did that very objectionable, I must say plainly, that very improper person get introduced to you, with whom you went home last night?"

"Do you mean Mrs. Fitzjames, aunt?" replied the young man, looking steadily in her face.

"Yes, Edward, I certainly do!" she replied with great solemnity.

"Mrs. Fitzjames is an old friend of mine—Lady de Paddington; and I never give up an old friend," returned the youth, very evidently intending to be dogged and resolute.

"What do you mean, my dear Edward? How can she be an old friend, when she applied to me last night for an introduction to you?" replied the old lady, adding in an undertone: "which I, very properly, refused."

"She did *that*, because it was such a monstrous long time since she had seen me; and very natural too!" he replied snappishly.

"I should exceedingly like to know how she

got to Dr. Harrington's," muttered his aunt, seemingly in soliloquy. "Really people ought to be more careful who they ask to their houses."

"I can ask her how she got there if you like it," returned his Lordship, now evidently prepared for open rebellion, "for I am going to call on her directly after breakfast."

"I do most sincerely hope and trust that you will do no such thing!" exclaimed her venerable Ladyship, who was becoming every moment more seriously alarmed. "If you were a few years older, my dear Edward, it would be more easy to make you aware of that abominable woman's real position and character. And then I am quite sure you would no longer feel any wish to continue your acquaintance with her."

"I am quite old enough, Aunt Paddington, to know that she is the most beautiful, and in every way the most charming woman I ever saw. So don't let us talk any more about it, if you please, Lady de Paddington, because it would be of no use, for it is quite clear we should not agree; and it is as well to tell you at

once, that say what you will about her, I am quite determined not to give up the acquaintance of so very charming a person."

This was the young gentleman's sturdy reply, and it was uttered in a tone that showed him to be very sincerely in earnest.

Lady de Paddington saw at once that any farther opposition at this moment, could only make matters worse; so, after the interval of a moment, she replied:

"Well, Lord Goldstable, a wilful man will have his way, we all know that; and I am the less anxious on the subject, because I know that it is impossible that many weeks, or even many days, can pass away, without your finding out that I am right, and then you will wish that you had been guided by me in this matter. However, I am truly thankful to know that you are affianced as fast as the laws of the land, and the laws of honour too, can make you, to so every way admirable a young lady as Miss Harrington. On that point, thank Heaven! you are safe. And this is a great blessing, Edward, for it is impossible to say to what lamentable absurdity that infamous and designing woman

might not lead you. I am thankful now that you lost no time about it, for this most desirable engagement renders you perfectly safe."

And with these words, her Ladyship left the breakfast-room to the young man and his reflections.

He lost not many minutes, however, in meditating on the lecture he had received. On the subject of his engagement with Miss Harrington, indeed, he felt considerably puzzled; but as yet he was not sufficiently in love with her brilliant rival, to make him feel any very great horror at the idea of being engaged to be married to Kate. He had not as yet quite forgotten the sweet voice, and the sweet smile, with which she had addressed him, and which had awakened in his breast the first gleam of hope that he might some day or other like dancing in a ball-room very much.

But still, though not very unhappy about this engagement, he was a good deal puzzled. He had read in the newspapers about ladies bringing actions against gentlemen for breach of promise of marriage, and he thought he should not like to have such a thing happen to him at all, and the idea of it gave him a decided qualm. But

then, on the other hand, something which very strongly resembled instinct, created a feeling of doubt in his mind as to the probability of Miss Harrington's doing anything of the kind, even if she really were very much in love with him, on account of his not being so conceited, as all the other young gentlemen of her acquaintance were.

In short, he did not very well know what he thought, or what he ought to think, on the subject; and it was in this frame of mind that he set forth on his expedition to Jermyn Street, whither we should have much pleasure in accompanying him, were it not absolutely necessary that we should attend at a conference in Vale Street, between the Doctor and his lady, preparatory to the important conversation which Lady Augusta purposed holding with her daughter immediately afterwards.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The total dislocation of all his usual habits caused by the ball and its attendant miseries, joined to the operation of three or four glasses of champagne and a supper of lobster salad, had, in some degree, exacerbated the usually placid temper of the excellent divine, and caused him to reply to his lady's amiable salutation by growling forth his conviction that if the necessities of a London season often entailed such persecutions and sufferings as those occasioned by the entertainment of last night, Oxford would be a far preferable residence during the spring.

"Perhaps it would, my dear," replied Lady Augusta, meekly, for she was an admirable

proficient in the *suaviter in modo* system, "but at present," she continued, with a sort of tender smile, "I want to speak to you on much more important matters. You have not as yet, I presume, heard from Kate what passed between herself and Lord Goldstable, last night?"

"No, I have heard nothing, Lady Augusta. You mean that he asked her to dance, I suppose?" quoth the Doctor surlily.

"No, Dr. Harrington," she replied, with solemnity, "that is not what I mean. I am come here to inform you that Lord Goldstable has asked her to marry him."

"Good Heavens, Lady Augusta! what is it you say? You cannot mean it seriously: it is impossible!"

Lady Augusta only smiled and nodded her head in reply.

"What!" resumed the electrified Doctor, "the first time of seeing her?" But after meditating with a look of exceeding benignity for a minute or two, he added, with a shrug: "Well! so much the better, my dear. So much the less trouble, you know, in balls and parties, and all follies of that sort. And it is all positively settled then? Pretty, dear Kate!

She is a lucky girl, Lady Augusta, and I congratulate you also, my dear, with all my heart."

"The offer has certainly been made, Dr. Harrington," resumed the lady gravely, "and I will not deny that this is a subject of congratulation; nevertheless, we must not be too hasty in supposing that the marriage is absolutely settled. You have yet to learn what your daughter's sentiments may be."

"Gracious Heaven, Lady Augusta! why do you talk such nonsense?" cried the dismayed Doctor, while a very apoplectic flush impurpled his face, "you do not mean to tell me that there is any chance of her refusing his offer? Refuse eighty thousand a-year, with large accumulations in the funds and ministerial interest! It is quite impossible! It is utterly incredible, Lady Augusta! What on earth could have put such an idea into your head?"

"The real fact is, Dr. Harrington, that Kate, on receiving the proposal, walked away without saying a single word, I believe. At least, that is all I can make out from Lady de Paddington's account; and her authority, of course, is her nephew."

"Mere shyness! Mere childish shyness! Where is Lord Goldstable? I wish to speak to him myself. The error must be remedied immediately. I am confident that his Lordship will not take offence at the silly shyness of so young a girl. On the contrary, I should think he would like her the better for it. She is a mere child, Lady Augusta, a mere child!"

And here the Doctor, whose emotion had caused him to rise from his chair, was compelled by difficulty of breathing to resume it.

Lady Augusta, who had not forgotten that he had threatened to make her pass the London seasons at Oxford, was malicious enough to remain silent.

"Am I to understand by your silence, Madam," thundered the Doctor, "that your Ladyship acquiesces in this preposterous absurdity, and very evident mistake?"

"Why what would you have me do, my dear Doctor?" returned his wife, with very provoking meekness and resignation.

"Do, Madam! I would have his Lordship made aware, that, whatever movement might have been dictated by the shy young girl's agitated feelings at the first hearing his

flattering, but very sudden declaration, she never had any idea of indicating a refusal by it. And, moreover, he should be given very clearly to understand that her family accept his very flattering offer with gratitude."

"That has been already done, Dr. Harrington, with the exception of the *gratitude*, which I did not think it necessary to mention," replied her Ladyship, with something like a noble sneer.

"Well, well, Lady Augusta, very well," growled the Doctor, partly in manifestation of standing corrected, and partly in token of being in some degree satisfied.

"Does nothing else occur to you, as proper to be done under the circumstances?" rejoined the lady, with something of reproof in her tone.

"Assuredly it would be desirable to ascertain that his Lordship's sentiments remain unchanged."

"And about Kate's sentiments, Dr. Harrington?" returned Lady Augusta, very quietly, but throwing a glance full of meaning at the Doctor's face.

That illuminated and illuminating beacon,

instantly indicated an enormous change in the moral attitude of his spirit. In speaking of "his Lordship's sentiments," there was all the intense reverence of tone and manner, with which *such* members of the Church are apt to mention all members of the House of Lords. But now it was with a bent brow and a fiercely raised voice, that he said: "My daughter's sentiments, Lady Augusta, are, it is to be presumed, in no way discordant or contradictory to those of her parents; or the Christian teaching which it has pleased Providence to provide for her, has been of little avail. I beg, if you please, that I may not hear of any folly or wickedness on Kate's part, in this very important affair: none of the silly speeches of a child, under such circumstances, ought to be attended to, or repeated."

Lady Augusta perfectly well understood this to mean, that any trouble, or difficulty, or disagreeables of any kind, which the task of coercing Kate's inclinations might entail, should be borne wholly by her mother, and in no degree by her reverend father. But this she did not intend should be the case. She therefore replied: "Would it not be better, Dr.

Harrington, that you should hear from her own lips, what her feelings are upon this subject? I have not myself spoken to her at all, since Lady de Paddington announced to me that the offer had been actually made."

"No, Lady Augusta, I decidedly think that it would not be better," replied the Doctor, very authoritatively, "she might be too much overawed by the presence of her father, to have the power of speaking her sentiments freely. It is a mother's duty, Lady Augusta, to be the counsellor in matters of this sort." And the last words were spoken with a very striking degree of moral dignity.

"Well, Dr. Harrington, so be it, then," replied his obedient wife, "I will see Kate, and hear from her what she may wish to say upon the subject, and what explanation she may choose to give of her having ran off in so extraordinary a manner. But I warn you beforehand, Mr. Warden, that it will probably be necessary for you to exert a father's authority in this matter. Lord Goldstable has been assured by his excellent aunt, that her conduct was entirely the result of girlish folly and bashfulness, and that it meant nothing in

the least degree approaching a rejection. So far all is well; but I will own to you that, from what I heard last night, I think there may be reason to fear, that Kate has much worse nonsense in her thoughts than any which can be characterized as mere girlish shyness. If this should prove to be the case, is it your pleasure that she should be permitted to follow the dictates of her own whim, or of her own *heart*, as she would be sure to call it?"

"Lady Augusta," replied the exemplary divine, in a tone in which indignation and surprise seemed to contend for mastery, "it is exceedingly vexatious, and I must add that it is not consistent with your usually admirable sense of decorum, to put such a question to me, or even to conceive such an hypothesis. Is it *my pleasure* that my daughter should be permitted to throw herself away, without a saving hand stretched out to save her? Gracious Heaven! what a question! *No*, Lady Augusta, it is *not* my pleasure, and so both you and the young lady shall find, if—if you should find it necessary, as I trust you will not, ever to allude again to so very disgraceful a supposition."

"That is quite sufficient, my dear Doctor," returned her Ladyship, with two or three significant little nods; "now that I am in possession of your views on the subject, I doubt not that we shall be able to act together in a way that may enable us to settle this very important business as it ought to be settled. Kate is a very good girl, and though she might, like other young things of her age, be guilty of folly, I believe her to be incapable of disobeying her parents. I will now go to her, and I will not trouble you again unless it should be absolutely necessary."

And so saying, the excellent mother walked up stairs to her boudoir, and immediately dispatched a note to Kate, intimating that she was to come to her there.

The poor terrified girl was expecting the summons, and instantly obeyed it.

She found her lady-mother radiant in smiles, and with every outward appearance of being in the happiest state of spirits imaginable.

"Well, Kate," she began, "I know you have great news to tell me. But your news is no news, my dear, for I heard all about it last night from our excellent friend, Lady de

Paddington. I have just been telling your father, my dear child, that all my brightest hopes have been more than realized, by Lord Goldstable having proposed to you last night. He is, I need hardly tell you, my dear Kate, as much delighted with the tidings as I am myself, and most sincerely do we both congratulate you. You have a high destiny before you, my dear child, and you will, I am certain, wear your honours gracefully and well. Both your good father and myself, are confident that you will be everything that you ought to be in the very exalted station which awaits you. But what is it, my love, that your too devoted lover has got into his head about your having left him, before he could express one-half of all the happiness he felt? Did you really forsake him so very cruelly, Kate? However, it was not very difficult to guess how the matter really stood, and that you made your escape, in order to prevent his raptures from attracting too much attention. And, upon my word, I cannot blame you for this—and so I told Lady de Paddington: and I flatter myself I have set everything right. You will soon give him a little more usage *du monde*, Kate. Meanwhile,

I have guarded against all mistakes, and the happy young peer considers your engagement as indissoluble as it is delightful."

"My dear mother," murmured the agitated Kate, blushing and turning pale with rather alarming rapidity, "my dearest mother, I am deeply grieved that you should have been led into such an error! I neither am, nor ever can be, engaged to Lord Goldstable; and there was no mistake in his supposing that I left him so abruptly, in order that he might at once understand that it was not my intention to listen to him. Had the manner of his proposal been less abrupt, mamma, the manner of my rejection would have been so likewise."

These words were spoken with the utmost gentleness, but with a good deal of firmness also, and there was a short pause after she had ceased speaking, as if the adversary was preparing for an effective attack.

"Let us understand one another clearly, Kate," said Lady Augusta, at length, speaking in a low quiet tone, that seemed to express both wisdom and gentleness, "let us understand one another. Young ladies often talk a great deal of very pretty bashful nonsense about taking

time, and not knowing their own hearts, and so forth; and all this does very well, and may be excusable, perhaps, when they are discussing such a subject with their young friends and companions. But with a mother, Kate, the case is wholly different. In speaking to your mother, and especially on the present occasion, when speaking of a match which is decidedly the most brilliant that can by possibility be offered to you, such childish folly is sadly out of place, and we must have no more of it. This is a business of very serious importance, not only to yourself personally, but to every member of your family, and as such, if you please, we will now speak of it. Lord Goldstable offers you his hand in marraige—he offers you his coronet and eighty thousand a-year. Am I to understand, that you wish to reject this offer?"

"Yes, mamma," replied Kate, very firmly and distinctly, "yes, mamma, I do wish to reject it; and I do and must reject it."

"Very well, Kate. Now listen to me," returned Lady Augusta with a cold, quiet firmness in her manner, that had more of steadfast determination than gentleness in it.

"Such perversity, and such unnatural disobedience as you now exhibit, might justify my withdrawing my care and affection from you altogether, by permitting you to rush unchecked on your own destruction. But it is not in my nature so to treat a child, to whom from its birth I have used nothing but affection and gentleness. No, Kate, I will not so abandon you to the fate you deserve. You *will* marry Lord Goldstable: it is best that I should at once tell you so. In talking of rejecting him, you speak with equal ignorance and presumption. You are a minor, an infant in eye of the law, and therefore, most fortunately! you have no power, either to reject or to accept any such proposal, without the consent of your parents. If your own good sense is not sufficient to convince you that your father and mother must be the best judges of what is best for you; if, unhappily, your sense of religious duty is not sufficient to induce you to yield obedience to your parents, it is fortunate that the law of the land provides a remedy. Our glorious constitution has not left the well-being of families, and of society in general, to the judgment of wrong-headed children like your-

self. Now retire to your room, think over what I have said, and remember that we consider you, and that you must immediately learn to consider yourself, as the affianced wife of Lord Goldstable."

Kate rose from her seat, and leaning on the table with both her hands—for she was trembling in every limb—she said in a low voice, "It is absolutely necessary before I go, mamma, to confess to you another fact, which makes it impossible that any law should compel me to be Lord Goldstable's wife:—I am affianced to another, mamma; and I was so at the time Lord Goldstable proposed to me."

"What words are you saying?" cried Lady Augusta vehemently. But immediately resuming her former cold and quiet tone, she said, with a bitter sneer, "And is it your purpose to favour me, by communicating the name of the gentleman?"

"It is Mr. Caldwell, mamma," faltered Kate, almost inaudibly.

"Infamous! It is too bad to be possible! It is absolutely infamous!" cried Lady Augusta, in a tone considerably more vehement than ladylike. "For you, poor silly child," she

added, "I can almost pity you, for you must have been most basely beguiled into this disgraceful conduct. But in what words can I describe the conduct of the villain, who has thus beguiled you? *He* knew, if you did not, that a child of tender years can give no promise of marriage without the sanction of her parents. And well, too, did he know that your parents would never consent to such an alliance."

"Speak to my Uncle Walter on the subject, dear mamma," said Kate, gently. "I do not believe that he thinks Mr. Caldwell's alliance would be objectionable."

"Your Uncle Walter? It is he, is it? But, no, I will not believe anything so very disgraceful! Yes, I will speak to your Uncle Walter on the subject. And now, once more, I tell you to retire to your room. But do not let your meditations there deceive you. You are *not* to become the wife of a man, who has got to work for the means of existence. But you *are* to become the wife of a highly descended young nobleman, with an income of eighty thousand a-year. A cruel alternative! Is it not?" and as she spoke, the Lady Augusta

waved her daughter from her presence with a degree of dignified scorn, which was intended to be overpowering.

But poor Kate saw it not. She did not wait to hear her dismissal again repeated, but crept to her cell, and shut herself up therein, with no very hopeful or happy feelings.

CHAPTER XIX.

We left our poor Kate, at the conclusion of the last chapter, frightened and alone, to do battle, as best she might, with the first great misfortune of her life. As far, indeed, as threatening her with the hand and coronet of Lord Goldstable was concerned, the whole thing appeared to her deliberate judgment to be too monstrous, too absurd, to justify any very serious alarm about the consequences.

Had there been no Mr. Caldwell in the case, she would probably have very soon recovered her tranquillity; for with all her young ignorance, she was fully aware that the laws of the land would be quite as effectual to prevent a forced marriage as an imprudent one; and though the

idea of opposing both father and mother with such resolute firmness, as must oblige them to abandon their hopes of making her a peeress was very painful, she still felt that she *could* do it—that she *ought* to do it—and that it would be done.

But she was far less sanguine as to the result of her attachment to Mr. Caldwell; for even if he would consent to wait patiently till she was of age, she did not feel so sure of being right in marrying in direct contradiction to the wishes of her parents, as in refusing to marry in direct contradiction to her own.

The more she thought about it, the more she doubted, and, as a matter of course, the more miserable she became. Long did she sit with her aching head resting on her hand, and her unconscious eyes fixed upon one particular star in her carpet without advancing a single inch one way or the other; for neither did she teach herself to feel that it would be at all possible to live without Mr. Caldwell, nor yet that she should ever have sufficient strength of disobedience to marry him in opposition to the will of her father and mother.

In the very midst of this melancholy and

well nigh hopeless musing, a bright thought suggested itself to her, which came like a gleam of sunshine to her heart: "She would go to her Uncle Walter, and tell him everything!"

The interval between the thought and the deed, was no longer than was needed to climb the attic stair which led to her uncle's little sitting-room, and after one moment's pause at the door to collect her scattered thoughts, and recover her breath, she gave the usual little knock by which she was accustomed to give notice of her approach.

"Come in, Kate!—come in, my child! I know your knock, Kate, and your step too," were the words which greeted her from within.

She entered, and found the old man busily engaged with his eye at the magnifyer, and his hand at the object-glass of his microscope, while a large manuscript volume lay open on his desk, ready to receive his observations.

"You are just in time, Kate, to note down for me the particulars of my examination; so take that pen, my dear, and scribble away from my dictation."

As he said this, the old gentleman's steady eye and hand were still employed with the busi-

ness he was upon; but the very first sound of Kate's voice, as she answered him, at once arrested his attention, and caused the microscope to be instantly laid aside. And then poor Kate began to feel timid and embarrassed. The conversation which she had determined to have with her uncle seemed much more difficult to begin now, than it had done before she mounted the stairs; and it was with rather a faltering voice and frightened manner that she began to explain her errand, while her uncle led her to a chair, and placed himself in another by its side, still retaining the hand he had taken in his own.

"I came, Uncle Walter," she began, "I came to you, because I thought that you would kindly listen to me while I told you something that has happened, which has pained and frightened me very much."

"Come, come, darling, look up at me! It is nothing very bad, I dare say," said Walter, smiling cheerily, as he bent his head to look into her downcast eyes. "But whatever it be, Kate, scruple not to speak to me with entire confidence; and whatever your trouble be, I dare say that, between us, we shall find out a remedy."

"Dear uncle! I know I may count on your

kindness; but I know also that it is very possible you may think me too resolute, and too self-willed, if I tell you everything."

"It certainly may seem likely enough, Kate, to you, and to everybody, that no two creatures could be found more widely sundered than an old forest-bred barbarian, past seventy, and a blooming young London lady, in her teens. Yet, nevertheless, Kate, I have a pleasant sort of notion that there are some points of sympathy between us."

"It was something of the same sort of feeling, I believe, Uncle Walter, which prompted me to run up stairs to you in my trouble," said Kate; "and this trouble is no light one, dear uncle; and I don't see very clearly how you or any one else can help me."

"Tell me what it is, my dear, at any rate. And if I cannot help, I may try at least to comfort you under it. Speak then, dear child, and tell me all about it."

"Yes, I will tell you everything," she replied.

"Last night at the party, Uncle Walter, there was a young nobleman called Lord Goldstable. In the very strangest and most sudden

manner in the world, he told me that he wished me to marry him."

"Impertinent scoundrel!" muttered Walter Harrington. "Do you think he was tipsy, my dear Kate?"

"Oh! dear no, Uncle Walter, not at all. Strange as it seems, I believe he spoke quite seriously; and his aunt, Lady de Paddington, and my mother too, I believe, knew what he intended to do. At least, mamma has spoken of it to me, as if she did not think it strange at all—and she wants me very much to accept him."

"How long have you and your mother known him, Kate?" inquired Walter.

"We never saw him before last night, Uncle Walter," she replied. "He is a perfect stranger to us all."

"And what answer did you make to this presumptuous gentleman, my dear," said her uncle.

"Indeed, Uncle Walter, I don't think I said anything; but instead of speaking, I walked away from him directly."

"Well, Kate, and I really know not that you could have done anything better. Perhaps

it was the least objectionable way of giving him to understand, that you do not wish to have anything more to do with him. It certainly was rather a startling adventure, Kate; but I do not see why it should make you look so unhappy."

"I should not look unhappy, Uncle Walter, if that were all. But I have a great deal more to tell you! Mamma says that I *ought* to marry him, and that I *must* marry him," rejoined Kate, mournfully.

"And from what motive does she wish you to marry this perfect stranger, my dear child?" said the old man, looking at her anxiously. "Are his parents among your mother's particular friends?"

"No, Uncle Walter," replied Kate, blushing violently. "But mamma thinks it a great advantage to be so rich as he is."

Something like a groan burst from the broad chest of the old man, and for a moment, his singularly benign aspect was changed to a look of great anger, but this lasted but a moment only.

"One may live long, Kate, and study nature through a microscope daily," he added, with a

smile, as he pointed to the instrument on the table, "and yet we must be contented to pass off into a higher sphere, without being able to comprehend one half of the phenomena, either physical or moral, which surround us in this. But do not let us quarrel with this glorious portion of creation on that account, my dear child. If you and I were more intimately acquainted with the philosophy of mind, and all the puzzling series of causes and effects by which all minds are actuated, I dare say we should be more disposed to laugh than to cry at what now appears so terrible to us."

Kate listened to him very meekly, but not much as if she was likely to find consolation from his speculations; and despite all her efforts to prevent it, her eyes were full of tears.

"My dearest," he exclaimed, "do not let me see you so overcome by discovering that all people do not feel and think alike;" and then added, laughing: "Fear not, sweet wench! They shall not touch thee, Kate! I'll buckler thee against a million!"

"Then to you, and your influence, I will trust myself, my dearest uncle," replied the comforted girl, with a smile that spoke hope

and confidence. "And yet," she resumed, while a warm blush mantled her cheek, and a look of sorrow again took possession of her features, "and yet I have hardly a right to say that either—for—you do not know all—you do not know that my mother has said that Mr. Caldwell—you do not know that she has declared that I *shall* marry Lord Goldstable! And how can I deny that she is right, when she tells me that it is *my duty to obey her?*"

"Obey!" shouted the old man, in a tone which Kate feared would convey to the whole household the subject of their conversation. "Obey! You do not, I presume, mean me to understand that your parents, either one or the other, would lay on you as a parental command, the injunction to marry a man whom your own feelings did not prompt you to marry? You cannot mean to say, my dear, that they have the slightest wish of the sort? Kate Harrington, I neither do nor will believe anything so shocking and preposterous!"

Another knock was at this moment heard at the door of the attic study of Mr. Harrington; and this was immediately followed by the entrance of Henry.

"What! Kate here!" he said; "I fear from the looks of you both, that I have interrupted a very interesting *tête-à-tête*. I came, uncle, to propose to you a visit to the Esquimaux family, exhibiting at the Egyptian Hall. But there must be something stranger than they are, here; for Kate looks melancholy, and Uncle Walter angry. And this must betoken something very extraordinary. I hope, Kate has not been doing anything very naughty, has she, uncle?"

"What she has done, Henry, is this. She has suspected her father and mother of intending an infamous atrocity," replied Walter.

"What awfully strong expressions, uncle!" returned Henry, "we do not believe in infamous atrocities now-a-days, in polite society. What is your account of the matter, my little Kate?"

"I am shocked, Henry, to have appeared to Uncle Walter to make such an accusation; but perhaps, Henry, I may seem less blameable to him, if you should agree with me in thinking that my fears are not quite unreasonable."

"In Heaven's name what is that you are looking and speaking so solemnly about? Tell me what has happened, Kate?" said her brother

gravely, and with every appearance of real interest.

"This it is, Henry," she replied. "Mamma has just told me that she wishes me to marry a man whom I have never seen but once, and whom I never want to see again; and I was telling my uncle of my distress at finding myself obliged to make such a marriage, or else of disobeying the command of my parents. But Uncle Walter thinks it wicked and absurd in me, to suppose that any such obedience could be required of me."

"I am afraid," replied Henry, with a touch of his usual sardonic gravity, "I am afraid that my uncle is not sufficiently acquainted with the habits and customs of the *gr-r-rand monde*, to judge very accurately what they may be expected to do, or not to do. We are very highly civilized, Sir, in this part of the world."

"Am I to understand then, Henry, that you too are of opinion that it is the wish of your father and mother to coerce the affections of their daughter, in order to give them an opportunity of selling her?"

"My dear uncle! what very shocking words you use," cried the young cynic. "I declare," he continued, affectedly casting down his hand-

some eyes, "that it seems to me to be positively indecent to speak of such things. There is no refinement, no delicacy in your language, Uncle Walter, so that it is almost unintelligible to polite organizations."

"Harry! Harry!" returned the old man, shaking his head, "this is no subject for jesting. Tell me plainly, boy, is it your opinion that my brother and his wife could be guilty of this enormity?"

"If it be so, Uncle Harrington," replied the young man more gravely, "I do assure you that they would be doing nothing out of the usual course." And then resuming his former tone, which was but too natural to him, he added, "It is, I assure you, usual, and doubtless altogether proper, that parents should advise their children, especially their daughters, on a subject of such great importance; having, *of course*, their happiness solely in view. And it is generally found, I believe, that those daughters who decline taking such advice, very frequently find the paternal roof rather a disagreeable shelter afterwards. Indeed, in some instances, I believe, their young lives become rather a burden to them than otherwise."

"Alas! alas! If this be true, it is worse

than madness!" groaned Walter. "First to cherish and foster every feeling of delicacy, and then—"

"Nay, *halte là!*" interrupted Henry, "for now, at least, you are doing our social system injustice. My sister Kate's education may have been somewhat neglected in this respect, but as a general rule, I must protest that the young ladies intended for the market, are carefully and admirably trained to prepare them for it. I can assure you, uncle, that our practice in that respect puts the method of the Constantinople dealers to shame. There the fair ones, we are told, do shrink painfully from the exhibition made of them, and evidently dislike the *trotting out*. But with the superior methods of training for our market, the pretty creatures are fully as anxious for the sale, as the seller."

"Oh, Henry!" broke in poor Kate, who for some minutes had been sitting with her face buried in her hands; "for my sake do not say such dreadful things! and in that jesting manner too!"

"My dear Kate," returned her brother, "I really am very sorry for it, but unfortunately

it is often the case in this world, that truths sound much more terrible than the falsehoods we are in the habit of uttering, instead of them. But that is not my fault."

"What then, Harry, is your conception of the duty of a young female in such a case as that of which you have been speaking?" demanded Walter.

"I have always been taught, uncle," replied the young man demurely, and exactly with the air of a child saying its catechism, "I have always been taught that marriage is a holy state instituted for the better securing of a handsome establishment and equipage, and that it is the bounden duty of a well-principled young lady to obey her parents, and keep these objects steadily in view in forming a matrimonal connection."

"And what becomes of her affections?" demanded the old gentleman.

"My dear uncle," replied the nephew, "we find it much more consistent with propriety to ignore all such secondary considerations. Any examination and investigation of that part of the subject would lead at once to objectionable topics, and infallibly suggest what my father would call very dangerous doctrine."

Having quietly listened to this speech, Walter Harrington crossed the room to the chair in which Kate was sitting, at two strides, and laying his large hand upon her shoulder, he said:

"Now then, my niece, hear my doctrine, dangerous it may be, to some of the framework of the blundering and corrupt social system under which you appear to be living, but it may prove, Kate, a very ark of safety to the pure of heart. I cannot be mistaken, my dear child, in thinking that I perceive in you such instincts as to what is right, as fairly to suggest the hope and expectation that you will not wilfully do what is wrong. And be assured of this, Kate—for it is as true as that the sun shines in the firmament—that no law, no sanction, no duty, authority, or any consideration whatever, can justify or excuse a woman for giving herself to any man whom she does not love. The doing so, my child, is an outrage against nature, and the God of nature. It is, perhaps, the worst and most mischievous departure from nature's law that can be committed by a young and hitherto innocent female, and it is accordingly followed by the heaviest retribution. An union formed

wholly from the dictates of passion is a grievous error; it is a wrong and disloyalty done to the higher portion of our nature; and it is an error which, I believe, rarely escapes its merited result of disappointment, sorrow, and suffering. But she who has accepted knowingly and consciously an unloved husband, has inflicted on her soul a stain from which recovery can hardly be hoped; for she has crushed out and destroyed in her heart all nature's promptings, and this can never be done with impunity. But if, in addition to this ill-judged self-sacrifice, the motive be the very basest possible, if gold be the bait, if the transaction be one of absolute and literal sale, I should not choose to use in your hearing any language adequate to express the depth of its infamy, or the frightful nature of its results."

The old man paused, and looked at Kate, as if he feared that he were treating her too roughly; and, in truth, the tears were trickling between her fingers as she hid her face behind the hand which rested on the table. Walter took a turn or two across the little room in silence, and then, turning to Henry, he said, in a lower tone:

"Is it not inconceivable, Henry, that the

same society which thinks no language strong enough to upbraid the degraded creature who sells herself, when the price paid is to save her from starvation, should smile upon and approve the very same act, when not the necessaries, but the luxuries of life are the legalized payment? Not to mention that, in the latter case, the additional impiety is incurred of invoking the sanction of religion upon the sacrilegious atrocity?"

"The feelings of society on the subject *are* rather anomalous, it must be owned," replied the more civilized nephew, with his usual coldness, "but really I don't see how it would hold together at all, if many people were to insist upon describing its doings in such very plain language as yours. If you do not conceal your opinions, my dear Sir, you will be voted the most troublesome, improper, indecent, and above all, the most dangerous person going. Ay, Uncle Walter, dangerous is the proper word; for who is there who has married a daughter, or, especially, who is hoping to marry a daughter, for title, estate, opera-box, or any other such natural consideration, but would listen to you with equal fear and aversion?"

"Have I then said anything that is not true?" asked the venerable philosopher, "nay,

have I even said anything controvertible, or even very profound? Is not what I have uttered truth of the very simplest kind?"

"No doubt, uncle, no doubt," replied Henry, smiling. "But permit me to tell you," he added, "that you appear to me to be altogether incapable of appreciating the enormous value of cant. It is quite a vulgar error to suppose that the principal or most valuable effect of cant is to deceive others. This is very far from being the case. Those born and bred under its influence, not only speak, but think cant; and it is quite certain that they must do so in order to speak it well. It is like a foreign language. To speak French well, you must think in French. In fact, it is this alone that makes our actual system of society possible. All crooked paths are made to look straight, and the rough places not only plain, but very particularly smooth. By the aid of its omnipotent eloquence, all the infamies committed among us are concealed even from the actors in them; and if the said actors do not appear absolutely holy, they at all events appear perfectly decent. Trust me, Uncle Walter, you will be held as an unwelcome intruder into this part of the terraqueous globe, if you persist in rudely tearing

down the delicate and graceful veil which cant throws over us. Respectable people will, for the most part, be quite ready to declare that your language is that of a very dangerous libertine."

Kate had risen from her chair during the latter part of this tirade of Henry's; and she now approached her uncle, and taking his extended hands in both hers, she said:

"You have certainly spoken much, dear uncle, that it was very terrible to hear; but you have at least made me feel that the course before me is a clear one. I think you have taught me to know real right from real wrong, more clearly than I ever did before. God bless you, dear uncle, and me too; and give me strength to act as I ought, let me suffer what I may!"

"God bless you, my own Kate!" returned the old man fervently. "I still hope that means may be found to make the right path no very painful one. We shall see."

And so saying, he led her to the door, her brother following her, for he wished to learn from herself the exact state of affairs as they now stood between her mother and herself; and he listened to her painful narrative with more sorrow than surprize.

CHAPTER XX.

We must now follow Lord Goldstable in his visit to Jermyn Street. It would probably have been evident, to any one more versed in such matters than was our noble young Scotchman, that his visit was expected by the charming widow. The indications of this consisted of small matters; but even those would have been perfectly intelligible to an experienced eye.

He was immediately shown into a very prettily arranged, but rather small back drawing-room, in which he found Mrs. Fitzjames reclining on a couch, in one of those elegant morning attires which such ladies know how to make more bewitching than the most splendid dress that ever graced a ball-room; and Lord

Goldstable accordingly thought her ten times more lovely than he had thought her the night before.

In truth, it would be difficult for any one to imagine a greater perfection of coquetry, or a prettier material on which to exhibit it than was now displayed by Mrs. Fitzjames.

She had many a year yet to pass, ere she reached that fatal period when candle-light is more favourable to the complexion, and to the eyes also, than the more truth-telling light of day. Nor was it even necessary as yet for her to make any skilful arrangement, in order to produce a *demi-jour* when she expected a morning visitor.

The white muslin lace-bedecked *peignoir*, from beneath which her exquisitely-shaped feet *chaussés* to perfection, and crossed over each other at the ankles, peeped forth, could not, it is true, display as fully as the dress of the preceding evening the ivory shoulders, or the beautifully-formed bust; but it admitted of being so arranged as to afford a partial view. And if the single white camelia of the night before, had shown to greater advantage the glossy tresses of her dark-brown hair, there

was something perhaps more bewitching still in the pretty composition of ribbon and lace which called itself a cap.

In one fair hand she held a book, with a slender finger between the pages of the "Loves of the Angels." It might, or it might not, attract the attention, and assist the talk of the expected visitor. But at any rate it had not been selected at random. Yet it would be doing wrong to the widow's discriminating good sense, did I omit to observe that had her expected visitor been a dozen years older, the subject of her studies would have been differently selected.

"Ah, Lord Goldstable!" she exclaimed, with very conspicuous delight, the moment he appeared. "This is, indeed, kind of you." And then holding out her hand to him, without changing her recumbent position, she added, "I am really ashamed to receive you thus. I know that I ought to have been dressed long ago. But the ball of last night, delightful as it was, fatigued me. I do not stand the late hours of London very well. I always look like a witch the next morning. Do you like these very late hours?"

"I don't think I should much in a general way; but I was pleased enough to be up last night, after I met you," replied his gallant Lordship.

"Ah! that strange—that most unexpected meeting!" she exclaimed, clasping her white hands, and raising her beautiful eyes heavenward." I can give you no idea of the pleasure it gave me! And then it was so delightful a change for me! Such a relief from the misery of finding myself among utter strangers! I should as soon have thought of meeting the sun in that strange ball-room as an old friend. I do assure you, Lord Goldstable, that I don't think I should forget that meeting if I were to live a hundred years!"

"Don't call me Lord Goldstable! Call me Edward, as you did last night; I like it so much better," said the youth, charmed out of all his shyness, and with a secret conviction at his heart, that he had never seen a really beautiful woman till he met his charming old friend Mrs. Fitzjames.

"Do you really choose that I should always call you Edward?" said she, with a smile of quite indescribable sweetness. "At any rate, it

must only be when we are alone, you know, or else people who did not know anything about the intimacy of our fathers would think it very odd. And, moreover, if I call you Edward, I shall insist upon it that you should call me Sophia. Will you?"

"Won't I!" returned the delighted boy. "But you must tell me, you dear, beautiful Sophia, who are the people I must contrive to get acquainted with, in order that I may be sure of meeting you, for it's as plain as daylight to me, that I shall not like any of the London parties unless I meet you."

"Young flatterer," she exclaimed, fixing on him a look half tender, half reproachful, "why should you try to make me believe that? I have told you that I scarcely know any one in London; so if you really wish to see me, you must come and look for me in my little quiet lodging here. And I will not be so—so untrue, Edward, as to pretend that I shall not be glad to see you."

"And don't you think I shall like to come, Sophia?" he replied. And it is astonishing how rapidly the young man improved under the influence of the beautiful Sophia's affectionate

encouragement. He not only enjoyed the full power of speech, but used it too, without any great symptoms of shyness, and became as conversable as it was in his nature to be. And then there followed a well-managed scene of flirtation, such as may perhaps have occurred before and may possibly occur again between a married woman (one who has been married is meant of course) and a lad. It was love-making made easy, and Lord Goldstable had never been in such high spirits before. And then she warbled a few notes, and reminded him that she had promised to sing Old Robin Grey for his amusement, to which he replied very eagerly: "Oh yes, do! sing it to me this very moment, my dear, dear Sophia!"

And then she led him into the other drawing-room, and having placed him very comfortably and very advantageously as to both seeing and hearing, she kept her promise and sang to him the touching ballad of "Auld Robin Grey," from the first word to the last. Her voice was rich and sweet, and though she had little science to help her, she gave the song in a style which might have enchanted more learned ears than those which now listened to her. Moreover, the

performance altogether was of that peculiarly captivating kind, which can be only achieved by ladies of her peculiar style of attraction.

After "Robin Grey" had been thus performed, there was a pause of perfect silence which lasted for a minute or two; it seemed, indeed, as if Mrs. Fitzjames shed tears, for a fragrant handkerchief was pressed for a short interval to her eyes, and her bosom heaved with a plaintive sigh. Then, suffering her handkerchief to fall (not unheeded) on the floor, she again ran her slender fingers over the keys of the instrument, and warbled mournfully but very sweetly:

"Oh! think not my spirits are always as light."

And with every word she said, and every look she looked, and every note she sung, and movement she made, the doomed Lord Goldstable fell more and more desperately in love with her; a progress of which she was as perfectly cognizant, as the angler is of the nibbling which his destined prey is making at the bait.

While this fascination lasted, Lord Goldstable forgot all about the social and legal penalties

with which Lady de Paddington had threatened him, in case he should break his troth to Miss Harrington. But when, at length, at about five o'clock in the afternoon, he left Jermyn Street (not, however, till he had given a gently asked-for promise to return ere long), his mind reverted with very considerable uneasiness to the dreadfully precipitate proposal which he had been rash enough to make to Miss Harrington, and then followed a terribly distinct recollection of all his aunt had said upon the necessity of abiding by it.

What shape his profoundly ignorant fears assigned to the vague denunciations of Lady de Paddington he would himself have been puzzled to say; but the general notion of being exposed and exhibited to all the great unknown world as having done something shocking and disgraceful, nay contrary to its usages and fashions, was really dreadful to him; and, despite his violent love-fit, he felt that, come what would, he could not bear it. It might be supposed, certainly, that this all-pervading fear of the world's ban would scarcely have penetrated to the remote seclusion in which this poor blundering boy had been educated; but this is decidedly

one of the cases in which, as the learned express it, the *omne ignotum pro magnifico* principle is particularly active.

The power of this often heard of monster, 'The World,' seems greater, from its indefinite vagueness, to those whose lot has been cast at a distance from its great tribunals; just as the judges of the land are objects of far greater awe to the village rustic, than to the familiar *habitué* of the Old Bailey. And thus during poor Lord Goldstable's thoughtful walk homewards, the consequences of being held up to the world's scorn, presented themselves to his imagination in shapes and forms equally undefined and tremendous.

Meanwhile, the long morning which his Lordship had passed with the too-enchanting Mrs. Fitzjames, had not been permitted to wear away in idleness by Lady Augusta Harrington. She was determined that her ill-judging daughter's destiny should not be marred for want of hearing good, and what must be considered as highly authoritative advice, and therefore about two o'clock, having previously dispatched a note to her friend informing her how matters stood, she sent to inform her daughter that the carriage

would be at the door in half an hour, and that she must get ready to accompany her in her drive.

To refuse her attendance was quite out of the question, and the suffering Kate meekly prepared herself for the penance she was thus commanded to undergo. But although she had certainly anticipated anything than a pleasant drive, she was, nevertheless, rather startled and rather shocked at hearing her mother give the order: "To Lady de Paddington's."

As the carriage drove off, Lady Augusta turned to her daughter, and said:

"Lady de Paddington has shown herself so true and valuable a friend in this business, that I think it due to her to let her know exactly how matters stand."

And these exceedingly disagreeable words, were the only ones spoken till the mother and daughter had arrived at the dowager's door.

Lady Augusta sent up her card, which instantly reversed the standing order against morning visitors in her favour, and they were forthwith shown into the brown-holland clothed drawing-room.

"My dear Lady Augusta!" exclaimed the

old lady, meeting her at the door with an extended hand, "you have arrived just in time to prevent my setting off to call on you. My dear Miss Harrington," she continued, turning with a most affectionate smile towards Kate, who was looking as pale as death, "I congratulate you most sincerely on having secured the prize, for which all the beauty and fashion of London are on the look-out. And I assure you, that I have no little pleasure in thinking that this happy event is, in some degree, owing to me."

"Kate will feel all the gratitude she owes you, my dear Lady, when she has sufficiently recovered her startled senses to become aware of what she has to thank you for," replied Lady Augusta, taking upon herself to answer for her mute daughter. "But at present," she added, "I am sorry to say, that she appears utterly incapable of forming a rational judgment on this or any other subject! It is not without a profound feeling of shame and humiliation, Lady de Paddington, that I confess to you how little all the care and affection I have bestowed on this ungrateful child, has availed to teach her the duty she owes to her parents. You will hardly believe it possible, my good friend, that a

girl so carefully brought up as she has been, should declare that it is her wish to reject Lord Goldstable, and that she positively refuses to obey her father's will and mine, on this most important affair of her life!"

"It is indeed almost impossible for me to believe that any young lady, not absolutely depraved in heart and mind, should so conduct herself," returned Lady de Paddington, solemnly. "Nay, I will not believe it!" she added, fixing her large, dull eyes with a sort of indignant glare on Kate, "I will not believe that she will persevere in such desperate wickedness, and such desperate folly. Let her be very careful that her sudden change of sentiments respecting my nephew, does not get abroad before she has well weighed the consequences! I can tell you, Miss Harrington, that the news of your engagement to Lord Goldstable, is at this very moment the talk of the whole town. Enchanted and happy beyond concealment, poor fellow, from the very moment that you listened to his proposal without rejecting it, he not only considered himself as engaged to you, but he poured forth his joy to me, and I considered myself as fully at liberty to spread the news. If you have

any regard for the honour of your family, and, let me honestly add, for your own reputation, Miss Harrington, you will reflect deeply before you give the world cause to believe that this greatly envied engagement is broken off. You can scarcely be ignorant, I think, of what must be the inevitable consequences of your breaking off this marriage? Trust me, young lady, that if you persist in your present line of conduct, it will be sedulously spread throughout the whole of what deserves the name of society, that Lord Goldstable has renounced the alliance '*for reasons;*' and we all know, I presume, the sort of construction, or, I might say, the natural interpretation that will be put upon this—"

Lady de Paddington suddenly paused, clasped her hands together with an appearance of very strong emotion, and fixed her eyes upon the carpet as if she dared not look up to witness the misery of her unhappy friend, Lady Augusta.

Poor Kate, however, turned an appealing glance upon her mother; but she found no comfort in the stern look she encountered in return.

"You begin, perhaps, to perceive, Kate, some of the ill-consequences likely to arise from disregarding the wishes and the counsels of your parents," said Lady Augusta, in answer to her mute appeal. "Believe me," she added, with great solemnity, "if you were now permitted to follow your own childish whims and wishes in this most momentous affair, new mischief and new danger would arise around you with every passing hour, and would dog your steps through life. It will be a cruel return to your father and myself for all our affection, if an only daughter should make her first step in life, by blasting her own reputation! Yet this must be the inevitable result, if we were to be weak enough to permit your acting according to your own caprice in this business."

Kate did not attempt to reply to this; it was not that, after what she had listened to from her Uncle Walter, she entertained for a moment any doubt as to what it was her first duty to do, but the difficulty which now beset her was a new one. The idea of so conducting herself, as to blast her own fair fame upon her first entrance into the world, was certainly very terrible to her; and the only touch of comfort that cheered her

heart at that very miserable moment, arose from the thought that she would consult Uncle Walter, and be guided entirely by his advice. But though she knew it not, this blessing was not at present within such reach as it had been; and she had a good deal of suffering still to endure before it would be so again.

Lady Augusta's next move was to utter a very dismal groan, and then to turn towards her friend and say: "But you know not yet, dearest Lady de Paddington, the whole extent of this misguided child's perversity. I blush, I blush with shame, as I resolve to tell it you; but I owe it to your well-tried friendship to have no concealments from you. You will pity me when I tell you, that at the same interview in which my daughter thought proper to inform me that she had changed her mind with respect to the proposal of Lord Goldstable, and that she now wished to refuse it, she also thought proper to announce to me that she had formed another attachment, and was engaged to Mr. Caldwell, the briefless young barrister!"

"My dear Lady Augusta! I do indeed most sincerely pity you," replied her sympathizing friend, throwing up her eyes and hands in a

style expressive of the deepest sorrow and dismay. "I certainly should have hoped that your daughter would have been incapable of forming a low attachment under any circumstances."

Kate had determined within herself to bear the martyrdom her two executioners were inflicting on her, in silence. But this attack upon her lover was more than she could bear, and she replied, haughtily enough: "Mr. Caldwell, Lady de Paddington, is not only a gentleman by birth, but also by education, conduct and manners."

"And fortune, of course?" sneered the exceedingly vulgar peeress in reply; but to this Kate did not vouchsafe any answer.

"Under these most unforeseen and unfortunate circumstances, there is but one course for me to pursue," resumed the indignant Lady Augusta. "Of course, she will not be permitted to see the insolent and presumptuous person, who has thus basely abused the hospitality that has been shown him. Neither shall I permit her, for the present, to hold any communication with that very wrong-headed and eccentric individual, Dr. Harrington's brother; for I am by no

means quite sure of his principles on such a subject as this."

Kate started, and changed colour very visibly on hearing this, of which her observant mamma was quite aware; but taking no notice of it, she continued the confidential statement of her intentions to her friend, by saying, with a good deal of decision and firmness of manner: "My purpose is to remove her at once from all possibility of mischief from this source. I shall keep this rebellious young lady strictly under my own eye, till I have arranged something with her father about sending her immediately into the country, and I flatter myself that I shall be able to achieve this, so that she shall leave town to-morrow. Meanwhile, dear Lady de Paddington, I trust implicitly to your good sense and discretion. Lord Goldstable need not, I think, know anything of her capricious change of mind for the present."

"Never fear me, my good friend," responded her worthy ally. "I think you have acted with admirable judgment, in deciding as you have done for the present. And for the future, let us hope that we shall not always find this young lady so obstinate. I trust that the time

will come, when she will be aware of her own great good fortune in having had such a mother!"

And thus they parted; Lady Augusta ordering Kate to go down before her, as if she feared to lose sight of her for a moment.

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